

# What is a Birth Doula?

A birth doula supports a woman and her partner during pregnancy, birth, and the early weeks of parenting, with reassurance, practical assistance, and information.

A doula is someone you come to know well by the time of your birth, and who is there during your labor, by your side, focused solely on you and your partner. She can encourage you, remain objective, and help your partner feel more confident about how to support you. She can also assist you with practical knowledge on comfort measures for labor, such as massage and suggestions for positioning. A doula can provide information when you have questions, and can help you communicate most effectively with your medical caregivers.

The main focus of a doula's role is often on the birth itself, but doula support can also be invaluable during pregnancy (especially if you face questions about tests or complications), and after the birth when she can help out with feeding and adjusting to life with a newborn.

There are a few things a doula is *not*. She is not acting as a nurse or midwife, so she does not provide clinical care such as doing examinations on you or checking your baby's heartbeat. The support a doula provides fits together with, but does *not* replace, the care of your doctor, midwife, or nurses.

Doulas do *not* make decisions for you, or speak for you. This is your birth, your baby, your life! A doula supports you by providing information and explanations you may want about your choices, but it's always you who decides what's best for you.

Doulas make a difference!

The research has shown that having a doula at your birth can make a real difference to the outcome.

The risk of an emergency cesarean is reduced, as well as the chances of other interventions happening like episiotomy and assisted delivery.

How a mother interacts with her baby, her satisfaction with her birth and her relationship with her partner are all rated significantly higher with women who have had a doula compared to those who have not!

