

What is a Doula?

A professional trained in childbirth who provides emotional, physical, and educational support to a mother who is expecting, is experiencing labor, or has recently given birth.

They help women have a safe, memorable, and empowering birthing experience. The goal of a doula is to help the mother experience a safe and positive birth.

What are the benefits of having a doula?

Women who have a support person by their side throughout labor and childbirth are more likely to:

- Give birth without pain medicine.
- Describe the birth in a positive way.
- Give birth without the need for a c-section/cesarean or vacuum delivery.
- Have slightly shorter labors.

Studies have shown that having a doula as a member of the birth team decreases the overall cesarean rate by 50%, the length of labor by 24%, the use of oxytocin by 40%, and request for an epidural by 60%.

What can you expect from a doula?

A doula doesn't provide medical care or deliver the baby; that's the job of your doctor or midwife. Their job is to make your birth experience, and your partner's experience, the best it can be. They can provide comfort with pain-relief techniques including breathing and relaxation techniques, massage, and laboring positions. After birth, many doulas will help new mothers begin the breastfeeding process and encourage bonding between the new baby and family members.

How can I find a doula?

Start by getting recommendations from your doctor, birthing centers, and hospitals. Also reach out to friends who have used doulas in the past or leaders at childbirth education classes. Make sure to meet and interview any potential doulas to ask about their experience, philosophy, and costs. Your health insurance may cover doula services, but if not, some doulas will offer a sliding fee scale.

What are the different types of doulas?

Birth doulas often start relationships with clients a few months before the baby is due. They will help create a birth plan and may provide information on techniques to reduce stress and trauma often experienced during childbirth.

Postpartum doulas provide support in the first weeks after birth. They provide information about feeding and caring for the baby. They are focused on support in the home after birth, whether that be helping with the newborn, reassuring mom, or being an extra set of hands around the house to help with cooking, cleaning, or with siblings while new mothers can bond with baby. They provide emotional support by encouraging a mother when feeling overwhelmed.

Reference:

- <https://americanpregnancy.org/healthy-pregnancy/labor-and-birth/having-a-doula/healthwise.net/ha2z/Content/StdDocument.aspx?DOCHWID=tn9822>

<https://providers.anthem.com/ky>