



A doula is a professional birth coach who provides emotional, physical, informational, and mental support to women during the prenatal, birth, and postpartum periods. While doulas do not provide medical care, they are extraordinarily knowledgeable about prenatal care, childbirth, and postnatal care.

What are the benefits of hiring a doula?

- Doulas help address prenatal concerns alongside physician support.
- Doulas help pregnant women make goals and formulate a birth plan.
- Doulas provide labor and delivery support through natural comforts, breathing techniques, different labor positions, and other tools.
- Doulas support the partners and family members involved in the birth.

I hired a doula for both of my pregnancies, and I am so thankful that I did. In fact, the first thing I recommend to any pregnant friend is that they find a doula. The most important benefits that I experienced from having a doula were: assistance with mental preparation, understanding patient rights, and postpartum support.

Mental preparation for childbirth

The hardest part of my first pregnancy by far was the mental preparation for childbirth and parenting. I had so many questions about childbirth, the answers to which I would sometimes get from research, asking my doctor during prenatal visits, and asking friends and family about their experiences. As most mothers know, however, nothing can truly prepare a pregnant woman for labor and delivery. I was daunted by nearly every part of it!

Of course, every pregnant woman feels that to some degree. But for me, the fear of



impending labor and delivery turned into bad anxiety. It kept me from my work, my family time, and my hobbies. I spent hours worrying about it and researching labor and delivery online, which often made things worse.

When I hired my doula, all of that changed. She met with me several times during the prenatal period for extended durations. She answered every question I had, offering research-based resources and an overview of the details, from who might be in the delivery room, to how long labor could last, to what happens if labor doesn't progress the way it should, etc. She helped me to better understand and mentally prepare for the biggest day of my life to date.

Understanding patient rights

During both of my pregnancies, my doula always encouraged me to understand my patient rights first and foremost. For example, before I had a doula, I didn't know that there is no such thing as too many questions when it comes to the prenatal period. I am somewhat shy, so I didn't want to pester my doctor with too many questions, but my doula set me straight. Any time I had a concern she encouraged me to call the office and talk to the doctor or a nurse available to address it right away. When I was able to have my questions answered as I thought of them, it significantly reduced my stress level which was better for myself and my baby.

Additionally, my doula helped me to understand my rights during labor and delivery and the postnatal period. Before I met with my doula, I didn't have a concept of what sorts of opportunities and decisions one has during the hospital stay. For instance, my doula explained that I would be able to choose whether to vaccinate my baby, whether to have certain tests administered right away or wait on them, whether to have a natural or medicated birth, and whether to have the cord cut right away or delay the clamping. All of these and other decisions are important things to consider, and I'm so grateful to my doula for bringing them to my attention well ahead of time.



Postpartum support

The transition from non-parent to parent was a very difficult one for me because I was younger than many moms and had very few parent family members and friends in my age range. I was overwhelmed and wrought with “baby blues,” both of which are very common among first-time mothers. These feelings would have been much worse if I hadn’t had my doula.

My doula stayed with my husband and me after both births for many hours to offer support. She continued to coach us after birth by just being there to answer questions, chat with us, and love on our new baby. She also offered lactation support, which was a huge help as a new parent. I called my doula often during the first few days with questions about breastfeeding, baby sleep, general baby health, and my own recovery. She was available to answer all of them. If emergencies arise, it is always best to call your doctor right away. But for the little questions and worries along the way regarding having a new baby at home, my doula was the perfect choice.

Doulas are especially helpful in instances of [postpartum depression](#) (PPD) and [postpartum anxiety](#) (PPA). These conditions can keep new mothers from performing necessary daily tasks, bonding with their babies, and enjoying motherhood to the fullest. Doulas can often differentiate these conditions from short-term “baby blues” and let you know when to call your doctor and get them diagnosed.

Find a doula

Doulas are truly birth partners, supporting moms through all aspects of birth and beyond. Check out these websites if you are looking to find a doula for yourself:



- [DONA International: Find a Doula](#)
- [Find a Doula – from Childbirth International](#)
- [Doula Match](#)

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