

# HOW A DOULA CAN HELP YOU



## WHAT IS A DOULA ANYWAY?

A doula is a non-medical support person that offers physical, emotional, and informational support to families during pregnancy, birth, and the postpartum period.

## WHAT DOES A DOULA DO?

- Provides continuous emotional and physical support (usually on call 24/7 support from 37 weeks until birth, and call/text/email support from moment of hiring)
- Provide information and resources if asked so you can research your choices
- Perform comfort measures such as massage, suggesting different positions in birth, helping with relaxation and breathing
- Accommodate any wishes for the birth environment (low light, soft music, etc) as long as it's possible based on the place of birth
- Support any birth partners and show them how to best support the birthing person
- Provides infant care education
- Provides infant care while you rest/sleep/shower/keep your bond with your other children strong/whatever you need to do
- Ensures the new parents are nourished -physically and emotionally
- Watches for signs of postpartum depression/anxiety and refers you to appropriate resources

## WHAT DOES A DOULA NOT DO?

- Give medical advice
- Replace your partner/other support people
- Provide clinical services (like medical exams, checking vital signs, or catching the baby)
- Provide prenatal/postnatal medical services
- Interfere with the patient - health care provider relationship
- Judge, condemn, or go against your wishes

## WHAT DO YOU NEED A DOULA FOR ANYWAY?

Look. You don't NEED a doula. You can do all this on your own. You may even be lucky and have a strong support system in place to help you. That is awesome! I wish this was the reality for everyone. Unfortunately, it's really not reality. So many folks find themselves wishing for a more positive birth or postpartum experience.

You may think that a doula is only for those who are hoping for a “natural” birth. Well, that’s just not true. Doulas aren’t just for those wanting to go medication free in birth. Doulas can be a way to have a more positive birth - no matter how you birth. Caesarean or vaginal. Induced or spontaneous. Home or hospital or birth center. Pain medications or no pain medications. Having a doula there who is a constant source of support as you go through labour and birth, and then postpartum can completely change how you view your birth and postpartum experience. No matter how it turns out.

Or you may think that you will have a support person in your partner, friend, or family member, so you will not need a doula. But a doula is not there to replace your partner or loved one. Your partner or loved one knows you, and your doula knows birth. It’s a partnership.

A doula cannot guarantee you a perfect birth experience. Things happen and birth is unpredictable. But a doula CAN help you feel supported and can take some of the mystery out of birth.

## BENEFITS OF A DOULA

Having any type of continuous support has benefits, whether that’s from a doula or other support.

- Can reduce risk of interventions and cesarean birth (largest effect from doulas)
- Increase chance of spontaneous vaginal birth (largest effect from doulas)
- Decrease in use of medications for pain relief
- Shorter labours
- Less chance of being dissatisfied with birth experience

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A POTENTIAL DOULA

The most important thing to look for with your potential doula is a connection. The actual questions you might ask will vary from person to person depending on what they are looking for in terms of support, but ultimately you want to feel comfortable and connected with your doula.

## HOW TO FIND A DOULA

There is never a wrong time to find a doula. Some folks hire a doula early in their pregnancy, and some wait until very late in their pregnancy. Some folks have even hired a doula after their due date has passed! I do recommend getting one as soon as you want one though so that you are able to develop a relationship with your doula.

- Check out the Doula Association of Edmonton for a list of over 80 local doulas
- Message “Doula for 1, Doulas for All” on Facebook for a list of doulas that meet your particular specifications
- Check out [doulamatch.net](http://doulamatch.net)

## A NOTE ABOUT COST....

Doulas can range in price depending on what kind of support you are looking for. Most doulas offer both birth and postpartum packages, though some offer hourly rates for their postpartum hours. Some doulas offer other services in their packages such as child birth education, birth photography or massage. If cost is an issue for you, many doulas will work on a sliding scale or offer payment plans. You could also ask your family and friends to pitch in as a gift.