

# 10 THINGS A DOULA CAN DO FOR YOU

Chances are you have heard of a doula, perhaps by another name such as, labor coach, birth assistant, birth attendant, or labor support person. You may even be acquainted with someone who has utilized the services of a doula, or know of one or two. It is a profession that has grown in the last two decades. Doulas provide supportive, non-clinical care that leads to improved birth outcomes and patient satisfaction. They have a different role from OB/GYNs and midwives, who are responsible for the health of women and infants.

Doulas are trained professionals who have received specialized training that allows them to assist families throughout the pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum period. A doula's most valuable skill is listening and being present for the client's needs. Behind that calm doula exterior is a person who is constantly thinking, strategizing and endeavoring to create an environment to support a pregnant, birthing or postpartum family.

Here are ten things doulas can do for you:

## 1. Doulas anticipate, smooth, and normalize transitions.

Beginning a family or adding a new member is both a joy and a challenge and a doula is present to assist in that welcoming process.

## 2. A doula helps an expectant couple explore their labor and birth options

in a nonjudgmental atmosphere so you can approach your due date feeling confident that your decisions have been well informed. Doulas will provide you with resources and education to assist while you decide what is important and foundational to your birth plan.

**3. Doulas have a large array of comfort measures to offer** during the labor and birth process. There are many evidence-based, non-pharmacological, common-sense ways to cope with discomfort. A doula's arsenal can include massaging, counter pressure, positioning tips, aromatherapy, acupressure, and the like to assist in pain management.

## 4. Doulas help you stick with your plan.

The goal is that you feel respected, cared for and listened to during the birth process, even if your plans change due to circumstances beyond your control. And should your plans change, a doula can help you explore your options so you are comfortable with the decisions that are made.

**5. Doulas can be extremely flexible,** filling in wherever it's necessary. Doulas can help you take charge when you need them to or blend into the background when it's all going the direction in which you hoped. They can be the one offering that comforting smile, a much needed drink, a cool washcloth, or that soft word of encouragement.

## 6. Doulas understand complex environments.

Hospitals and medical centers, where most people give birth, are complicated places. Doulas work to create collaboration and focus on your wishes and plans. If you need assistance maneuvering within the Labor and Delivery Unit, and it's personnel, the doula can help hone in on your questions and help you get the answers you're seeking. At home after the baby, doulas help visitors and family members find helpful roles as your family adjusts.

## 7. If you are seeking an low intervention or nonmedicated birth,

a doula can be invaluable as your birth process unfolds.

## 8. A doula can offer suggestions in gaining the most from an epidural

for those interested in an epidural assisted vaginal birth, while avoiding common pitfalls that can increase your risk of a C-section.

## 9. Doulas are a tremendous support to your primary support person.

Dads can feel the liberty to take break, catch a much needed nap, grab a meal, or just take a reprieve from the pressure of being Mom's primary support person. They can have the freedom to do so knowing Mom is still being nurtured and supported by her doula.

## 10. Breastfeeding support.

For those planning on breastfeeding, a doula is available to assist in the immediate postpartum hours to facilitate the nursing process. She is well versed in breastfeeding issues and can get you off to a good start, or if problems should develop beyond her scope of expertise, she can offer resource options where you can to get you the help you need.

### Studies have shown that births have....

- 25% shorter labour
  - 60% reduction in epidural requests
  - 50% reduction in caesarean rate
  - 40% reduction in oxytocin use
  - 40% reduction in forceps delivery
  - 30% reduction in analgesia use
- ... with a Doula in attendance

<http://www.rebecabatesdoula.co.uk/>



*Graceful Birthing  
of Virginia*

P.O. Box 862, Powhatan, VA 23139

[ruthvgreen@juno.com](mailto:ruthvgreen@juno.com)

Mobile (804) 894-4072

[www.gracefulbirthing.net](http://www.gracefulbirthing.net)

*Ruthy Green,*  
Christian Birth & Postpartum Doula Services

Home (804) 492-4456