

Finding A Doula

How to Find the Right Doula to Support You During Labor and Birth

Research says that having a doula (a trained labor support professional) as part of your labor support team can keep birth safe and healthy and help you avoid unwanted interventions. But how do you find someone who is a good fit for you? Here are some tips:

1. Get referrals.

Ask friends, childbirth educators, your doctor or midwife for recommendations. Some hospitals and birth centers provide doula services or referrals. Mothers in a local Birth Network or La Leche League (lalecheleague.org) meeting may have used doulas at their births and may be able to recommend one. Keep in mind that each woman and her birth are unique; you must decide if this doula is a good match for you.

2. Go online.

Check the websites of the organizations that certify and train doulas, such as DONA International (dona.org). Most of these sites will let you search by location for a doula near you.

3. Interview several doulas, if possible, before choosing one.

Think about what you want your doula to do for you. How will she fit in with the rest of your labor support team? How does your partner want to support you? Does he or she want to participate in the physical support or just be there emotionally for you? Ask the doula how she sees her role at your birth.

4. If cost is a problem, look for low-cost doula support.

If your insurance doesn't cover doulas and you can't afford the doula's fees, look for a doula-in-training. She may not have as much experience with birth as someone who is certified, but she may attend your birth for little or no fee in order to earn her certification. Some communities have volunteer doula services for women in need. Some doulas will write a contract for women to pay over time or even trade for another service that you can offer to her.

5. Trust your intuition.

Once you've followed the steps above, trust your gut feeling. Just as your own intuitive knowledge can guide you in birth, it can also help you decide who should be with you when you give birth.

Questions for Interviewing a Doula:

- What training and education do you have?
- How long have you been a birthing assistant, and how many births have you attended as a doula?
- What is your philosophy about childbirth and supporting women and their partners through labor?
- Will you meet with us to discuss our birth plans and the role that you will play in supporting us through childbirth?
- How many times will I see you before the birth? Will my partner be included?
- May we call you with questions or concerns before or after the birth?
- When do you try to join women in labor—at home or at the place of birth?
- Describe your role in my birthing. What exactly will you do?
- Do you work with one or more backup doulas for times when you are not available? May we meet them?
- What is your fee? What services does it include, and what are your refund policies?
- What is your policy in the event I have a cesarean?
- What other services do you offer? (such services might include breastfeeding support, postpartum for mom and dad, and new baby care.)
- Do you meet with me (us) after the birth to review the birth and answer questions?
- Are there two of your past clients whom I may call?