

Creating a Support Team

How to Choose and Prepare Non-Professional Labor Support

You may already have a “doula” among your family and friends. A doula is a woman experienced in birth who provides continuous emotional and physical support. Here are some tips for building a support team from within your family and circle of friends.

1. Choose carefully.

Select people who make you feel confident and safe and will follow your wishes at your birth. Don't assume that a friend or family member with medical experience will offer the best labor support. Studies have shown that continuous support from people without medical training may actually provide more benefits than support from people who are nurses or doctors.

2. Involve them in your birth planning.

Invite them to a prenatal appointment and your childbirth classes. Take a tour together of the place where you will give birth. Do a “labor rehearsal” to practice comfort measures. If you write a birth plan, share it with your labor support companions, and make sure they have a chance to talk about it with you and ask questions.

3. Create an effective labor support team.

If there are several people providing you with support (such as your husband or partner and a family member or friend), make sure that the members of your team communicate well with each other and that each person is clear about what his or her role will be.

4. Share your favorite books or websites about birth.

Let your team know about books and websites that are especially intended for people who will support laboring women. If there is a book that describes the kind of birth experience you want, share that with them too.



Friends and family can learn how to be effective support during labor.

Books for Labor Support Companions:

- *The Official Lamaze Guide: Giving Birth with Confidence* (2005), by Judith Lothian & Charlotte DeVries
- *The Birth Partner, Third Edition* (2007), by Penny Simkin
- *The Doula Book: How a Trained Labor Companion Can Help You Have a Shorter, Easier, and Healthier Birth* (2002), by Marshall H. Klaus, John H. Kennell, & Phyllis H. Klaus
- *The Labor Progress Handbook* (2005), by Penny Simkin & Ruth S. Ancheta