

Doula Information Sheet for Mount Auburn Hospital

- **What is a doula?**

A doula is a professional who provides emotional, physical, informational, and practical support during the labor and/or postpartum period. A doula does not speak for the individual giving birth and does not provide medical or clinical skills.

Birth Doula: A birth doula helps the laboring person to have an empowering birth experience. The doula will meet with the pregnant individual before the birth to discuss expectations and various options for labor. The doula will help the laboring person to relax, feel confident in decisions, provide massage, and assist with laboring and pushing positions to reduce discomfort during labor pains. The doula also helps the other support person/people to participate in the birth to the extent in they are comfortable in doing so. Some labor doulas take photographs, videotape the birth, or write a birth story for the new parents.

Postpartum Doula: A postpartum doula supports a new family after the birth. The doula may help by doing light housework, cooking healthy meals, and entertaining the newborn's older siblings. The doula can also demonstrate newborn care, such as bathing, swaddling, and breastfeeding. The doula may come every day for a few hours, a few times a week, or just provide support on the first day home. Some doulas will even help care for the baby at night so the parent can rest in between late-night feedings.

Related websites:

- *Doulas of North America* (<http://www.dona.org>)
- *Boston Association of Childbirth Education* (<https://bace-nmc.org/for-parents/>)
- *Doulamatch.net*
- *www.MassBirth.com*
- *www.tolabor.com*

- **Do I need a doula?**

Patients have asked us whether they “really need a doula for labor support” and if we recommend one. This is, of course, your choice. While some find doulas helpful, others are comfortable with the help and guidance they receive from the Labor and Delivery nurses and their doctor or midwife, as well as their own support person/people.

Doulas offer continuous support focused solely on the patient. Two national organizations offer standardized training for certification (Tolabor & DONA). There is no official licensing body for doulas, nor universal training requirements, resulting in a wide range of experience and background.

According to evidence-based research, birth doulas can have great effects on birth outcomes such as shorter labors, fewer birth complications, decreased risk of having a cesarean birth, decreased need for medication to progress labor, and reduction in epidural use. Patients also report an overall greater satisfaction with their birth experience.

- **Price**

There is a doula for every budget. Prices are often on a sliding scale and may range from no cost to several thousand dollars. New doulas frequently work for reduced fees in order to gain experience. These charges are generally not covered by insurance, but you may be able to use Flexible Spending Account (FSA) funds.