

North Carolina Women's Hospital

UNC Doula Program

“Doo-lah”

What is a Doula?

A doula is a specially trained woman who helps other women during labor by providing extra emotional and physical support.

How does a Doula help?

There are many benefits to having a doula with you during labor. In addition to providing you with extra support, the doula is able to provide information to your other support people so that they know how to best help you, too. Recent research studies indicate that a woman who has a doula with her during labor is likely to:

- Have a shorter labor
- Have a vaginal delivery
- Deliver without forceps
- Have more positive feelings towards her baby
- Have more positive memories of the birth
- Have less postpartum depression

What if I already have a partner or friend or family member coming for my labor?

Often your partner or friends or family member feel confused and helpless as they watch the labor. The doula can help them feel confident that they are assisting you in safe ways.

What is UNC BirthPartners?

UNC BirthPartners is a group of doulas that are trained according to national standards. These doulas are screened to make sure they are prepared to work in our all-volunteer program. Because they are volunteers, they may not always be available but we try to have a volunteer with us every day. When a BirthPartner doula is available, she is assigned to women who is in greatest need such as women who do not have other support persons or have special health risks.

What is the difference between a UNC BirthPartner Doula and a private Doula?

Private doulas are hired to be ready to come to the hospital when you do. The only way to be certain you will have your own doula is to hire a private

doula to work only with you. A private doula will meet with you before the birth and she will come to the hospital to be with you during your stay in labor and delivery. She will also visit you after your baby's birth.

Volunteers staff the UNC BirthPartners program. When BirthPartner doula is available, the staff assigns her to women who are in greatest need such as women who do not have other support persons or have special risks. Because BirthPartners is a volunteer program, it is possible that no volunteer will be available at the time you are in labor.

How do I sign up to have a UNC BirthPartner Doula?

To sign up for a BirthPartner doula, let your doctor, midwife, or nurse know of your interest during one of your prenatal visits. Your interest in having a BirthPartner doula will be noted on your prenatal record. Also, when you come to the hospital in labor tell your nurse of your interest as soon as you can. If you want more information about UNC BirthPartners, speak to your doctor, midwife, nurse or contact Lois Ballen, Director of UNC BirthPartners at 966-3422 or at doula@unch.unc.edu.

What does it cost to have a Doula?

- UNC BirthPartners doulas are free. No donation is required or expected. If you choose to make a tax-deductible donation, please send it to: The Medical Foundation of North Carolina, 880 Airport Road, Chapel Hill, NC, 27514. Make sure to write that it is a contribution for BirthPartners.
- Private doulas charge a fee for their services. The fee varies by doula.

How do I find a private Doula?

Here are some suggestions if you want to find a private doula or want to learn more about doulas in general.

- Doulas of North America – www.dona.org or 888-788-3662
- International Childbirth Education Association – www.icea.org or 952-854-8660
- Association of Labor Assistants & Childbirth Education – www.alace.org or 617-441-2500
- Ask a childbirth educator or massage therapist for suggestions

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