



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

## LABOUR COACH- DOULA

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### Introduction

Doula also known as a Labour coach and originating from the Ancient Greek word 'doule' meaning female slave, is a nonmedical person who assist a woman before, during or after childbirth, as well as her partner and or family by providing physical assistance and emotional support. The provision of continuous support during labour by doulas is associated with improved maternal and fetal health and a variety of other benefits.

A Doula (birth attendant) believes in "mothering the mother". This type of support allows the whole family to relax and enjoy the experience too. Certified doulas are trained professionals who recognize birth as a key life experience. They support the physical and emotional needs of women in labor. They provide information that helps the woman make informed healthcare decisions. In addition, they offer guidance and community resource referrals to families regarding maternal self-care, lactation, and other issues pertinent to the first six weeks postpartum. Physical Support

### Definition

A doula is a woman who is experienced in childbirth, but without professional credentials, who guides and assists women in labour. Doula is a woman who is experienced in childbirth and provides continuous emotional and physical support to the pregnant woman during her childbirth.

### Goal

The overall goal of a doula is

- ✓ To ensure the mother to feel safe and comfortable before, during and after delivery
- ✓ To enhancing the goal of doctors, nurses and health care personals which is to ensure a safe delivery for mother and child.

Doulas have no clinical role, duties or decision making, deferring instead to nurse or doctor.

### History of Doulas

In 1992, Doulas of North America (DONA) one of the first doula training and certifying organization was founded. By 1994, DONA had certified 750 doulas and 10 years later that numbers reached 5,842 the increase reflects the emerging popularity of the role, between 1992 and 2004, DONA has provided training to approximately 25,000 people.

### Types of doulas

There are two types of doulas

- Birth doulas/Labor doula
- Postnatal doulas

#### 1. Birth doula Labour doula

The role of the birth doulas includes

- Provide birth education
- Assists the woman in birth preparation Assisting the woman negotiation of their preference for birth (carrying out their plan for birth or assist the women for choosing the birth option)
- Stays with the woman throughout the labor.
- Debriefing previous births
- Provide Massage and other comfort measures during labor
- Helping a woman and her partner understand what to expect during labour
- Holding the mother's hand and helping her breathe through contractions

- Suggest position, helps to ease pain and facilitate a smoother and more effective labour
- Talking through emotional blockages which may come up in labour Facilitates communication between the laboring woman, her partner and her clinical care providers

## 2. Post natal Doula

The activities of postnatal doula includes

- Provides Breast feeding support
- Provide evidence-based information on infant feeding, emotional and physical recovery from the birth.
- Enhance mother-infant bonding (Rooming in)
- Provides postnatal counseling regarding postnatal diet, exercise, family planning etc
- Assists the mother for meeting her hygienic needs eg. Napkin changes, breast care, perineal care etc.
- Setting / sleep help with baby (rocking the little one to sleep)
- Assists with newborn care diaper changes, baby bath etc
- Assists for family adjustment to new baby, meal preparation and light household tidying.
- Suggest coping skills for new parents

### A doula physically supports

Supports the mother in a variety of ways. She will suggest alternative positions for the mother, remind her to maintain her fluid intake, make sure she goes to the bathroom frequently, or offer a cool washcloth for her forehead. A doula may help with coping skills such as breathing techniques, relaxation, or visualization. She may suggest dimming the lights or playing music or other methods of creating an environment that is soothing for the mother. A doula's hands-on skills may include massage, therapeutic touch, or counter pressure. This physical contact can provide not only comfort, but also emotional reassurance and support.

### Emotional Support

A doula provides culturally appropriate emotional support to the laboring woman, helping her to cope with labor in her own way. The doula, as a servant, lays aside any preconceived ideas she may have and supports the mother in the way that the mother chooses to labor. The foundation of emotional support is the doula's continuous presence. Words of praise and reassurance also encourage the laboring woman. Active listening during the birth and debriefing after the birth validate the woman's experience and provide an avenue for her to accept and process the birth of her baby in an emotionally healthy way. A doula also supports the father and others who are present, helping them participate in the birth experience to the extent and in the way that they are most comfortable.

### Informational Support

Prior to birth a doula provides information to her clients about the birth process in general, a variety of comfort measures and coping skills, and common procedures. The doula should offer evidence-based information in manner as unbiased as possible. Referring the client to reliable sources so that she can make her own decisions imparts confidence that she can draw on during labor. Doulas also offer information to the partner or others presents during the birth to help them understand the labor process and to possibly suggest comfort measures that they can use to help the laboring woman.

### The promise of the Doula to pregnant women

- I won't lie to you in labour
- I will do everything in my power so you do not suffer
- I will help you to feel safe
- I cannot speak for you, but I will make sure that you have a voice and I will make sure you are heard.

### Proven benefits of Doulas

Studies consistently demonstrates very impressive benefits for the mother, father and baby including

- ❖ 50% fewer caesarean section
- ❖ 40% reduction in the use of forceps, vacuum
- ❖ 60% requests for epidural
- ❖ 40% reduction in the use of synthetic oxytocin for induction and augmentations
- ❖ 30% reduction in use of pain medications
- ❖ 25% reduction in labour length
- ❖ Improved APGAR score
- ❖ Less time in NICU
- ❖ Increased rate of breastfeeding at 6 weeks of postpartum
- ❖ High self esteem and less depression at 6 weeks postpartum

### Comparison of Doula Vs Midwife

Comparison criteria	Doula	Midwife
Definition	A doula is an assistant who provides physical as well as emotional supports during childbirth She helps women in a non medical capacity	A midwife is a qualified professional She help a pregnant woman in delivering a baby
Etymology	Originating from the Ancient Greek word doule- Temale slave/servant	Origin from the old English mid wife meaning With woman
Duties	Establish a prenatal relationship with pregnant women	Perform physical examinations prenatally, during labour and postpartum period
	Help the pregnant woman and her partner to feel calm and supported during labour	Advise the woman on health during pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum period
	Use tools and techniques to help the pregnant woman to manage the intense physical sensations of labour and birth	Prescribe maternal health related supplements of medications eg Iron and folic acid, calcium supplements
	Provide postpartum emotional support and help with breast feeding initiation	Monitor the mother and her baby during labour and birth
	Direct the pregnant woman on her relatives to doctor or midwife for any medical questions	Consult with an obstetrician for medical complication arises which is out of the midwifery practice
Types	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Birth doula</li> <li>2. Postpartum doula</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.Certified nurse midwife (CNM)</li> <li>2.Certified professional midwife (CPM)</li> <li>3. Direct entry midwife (DEM)</li> <li>4. Registered midwife (RM)</li> <li>5. Licensed midwife (LM)</li> </ol>

### Conclusion

Doula is not a professional, but she is a birth coach or birth attendant. Doulas can be controversial within medical setting due to pressure on mother to avoid medical intervention in labour and pursue natural childbirth without an epidural or caesarean section. Having Doula in the birth setting will minimize the stress of woman during labour which may helps the woman to attain normal childbirth with minimal medical intervention.

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