



Helping you to give your baby a healthy start

Choosing your birth partner

Writing your birth plan and reading about labour will all help you understand what to expect when you give birth, but another way of preparing for the big day is by choosing a birth partner or doula. They will be there to give you support and help you make any decisions, should things not go quite as expected.

Choosing your birth companion

Giving birth can be a daunting prospect, so it helps to have someone you know and trust to support you on the big day. A birth partner's main role is to be there for you during labour and birth but they can also provide a comforting source of reassurance and practical help throughout pregnancy.

During labour, your birth partner should be prepared to act as your prompter, reminding you to move around, use the breathing techniques you learned at antenatal classes or yoga, doing whatever makes you comfortable. They should be your communicator, making sure you are aware of any interventions that might be needed and speaking up for you if necessary. They should also be flexible, knowing that anything could happen and being supportive of any new choices you have to make.

Many women choose their baby's father as their birthing partner, but you can choose anyone you trust – your mum, sister, a close friend, or a paid companion called a doula.

A doula offers emotional and practical support before, during and after childbirth. She can act as your birth partner or as an extra help to both of you. She can accompany you in hospital or be present at your home if you've chosen to have a home birth. However, her job isn't to replace a midwife. Doulas are trained and experienced in childbirth and their primary role is to enable a woman to have the most satisfying and empowered experience possible. They provide continual care and objective advice while keeping you and your birth partner focused on your birth plan.

You can find out more about the philosophy and service of doulas and search for one in your area at www.doula.org.uk.

If you'd like any more advice on choosing a birth partner or doula, our experienced mums, pregnancy advisors and midwives are here to help, give them a call on **08457 623 628** Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm. You can also reach them via Live Chat, available from 9am to 5pm for a one-to-one online conversation.