



Tips for Finding a Doula

A doula is a trained, non-medical, professional who nurtures, supports and offers guidance for families throughout labor and delivery, and after the birth. Doulas offer a wide range of services, including help with breastfeeding as well as postpartum care.

Studies show a doula's continuous labor support benefits mom and baby in many ways. It can often mean:

- **A more satisfying birth experience**
- **Less need for pain medications**
- **Less likelihood of needing a cesarean delivery**
- **Shorter labor**

So, where do you start and how should you choose? **Here are six tips to guide you in your search.**

1 Start looking early in your pregnancy
Choosing a doula early in your pregnancy will give you time to get to know each other and get comfortable with your birth plan.

2 Talk to other families
Talking with friends who have used a doula about their experience can help you start and even narrow your search. Technology – Facebook groups, a Google search for other online groups and forums – can connect you with other moms in your area.

3 Talk with the provider who's caring for you during your pregnancy
Let your doctor or midwife know you're planning on having a doula as part of your labor and delivery team. And if your provider has worked with a doula in the past, they may be able to offer a recommendation.

4 Check with doula certification programs
Most programs offer national, and even global, online directories of certified doulas that you can search by location.

5 Interview potential doulas
You not only want to gather important information about them and their background, but you also need to get a feel for whether your personalities are a good fit.

6 Trust your gut
When you choose someone to provide any service, there's no doubt experience and technical skills are must-haves. But soft skills, such as communication, empathy and teamwork, come into play too. Pay attention to how you connect with and feel when you're with them. No one knows you and what you need better than you do. Listen to and follow your instincts.