

Research Reviews

Doula Care During Childbirth

Kayne, M.A., Greulich, M.B., Albers, L.L., (2001). Doulas: An Alternative Yet Complementary Addition to Care During Childbirth. Clinical Obstetrics and Gynecology, 44(4), 692-703.

This article summarizes the effect of the doula on birth outcome and postpartum adaptation. The word “doula” refers to a person who is in the service of the woman in labor. The use of a doula evolved from the natural childbirth movement that resurrected interest in supportive companions during labor. Fathers became the labor coach, but they were found not always fully capable of attending to the mother’s needs and coping with their own emotions. Involvement of the doula helped to reduce pain, anxiety and fear in both the mother and father. Findings from research indicate that the presence of a doula decreases the use of analgesia and oxytocin, shortens the length of labor, and decreases operative births. In addition, mothers demonstrate higher rates of breastfeeding, and more competence in infant caregiving. Involvement of the doula begins prenatally, when a plan for continuous support during labor and delivery is made. The training of the doula builds on personal experience and is expanded through certification through a number of national organizations.