

What Your Doula Will Do.

What might the postpartum doula do when she comes to my home?

The role of the postpartum doula is fluid. An important part of her role is to come alongside the parents and together decide what type of support they will need. Some families need educational support: breastfeeding, infant support, and how to care for the new mother. Others rely more on the non-judgmental emotional support that the DONA postpartum doula has to offer. Still others have more practical needs – like feeding the family and running errands. Most families find that their doula provides all of these things, according to the needs that develop, as well as the ever-important communication between the doula and her clients. That said, prospective parents and their families sometimes wonder – just what will the postpartum doula do when she comes to my home?

A postpartum doula supporting a family during daytime hours might...

- Provide hands-on education on infant and mother care
- Come alongside the parents and help them to get to know the abilities and talents of their new baby
- Create a nurturing, restful atmosphere in which parents may eat, shower and nap
- Shop for groceries and prepare meals
- Play with older children and offer suggestions for how to integrate the new baby into the family
- Spend time with the baby, allowing parents to cuddle and have quality time with older children or just be alone together
- Introduce parenting tips, helping parents to learn skills that will enable them to cope with their new responsibilities
- Screen for hurdles such as breastfeeding challenges or postpartum mood disorders
- Make referrals to any local or informational resources that the parents might need
- Work herself out of a job by helping parents to gather the skills and resources that they will need in the upcoming weeks and months
- Help to organize the nursery and home
- Take care of the baby's laundry
- Offer a listening, non-judgmental ear

A postpartum doula supporting a family during the “overnight” hours might...

- Work herself out of a job by teaching parenting tips and strategies that will eventually make her services unnecessary
- Assess and help with breastfeeding
- Diaper and burp baby, so that mom does not need to move around – she can just stay cozy in her bed to feed and snuggle baby
- Bring snacks and beverages to the mother while feeding her baby at night
- Prepare pump supplies or bottles for the next feeding or the next day

- Take the contentedly fed baby to another room and help the baby to go back to sleep, so parents can sleep soundly between feedings

The relationship between the doula and her clients requires the same maintenance as other important relationships in life, such as marriage or close friendships. It is important that communication remain open, as clients' needs or priorities may change with time or experience. The doula anticipates these changes and will be prepared to remain flexible in her role.