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101/10 Lachlan Ave
Moore Park NSW 2021
1300 139 507
www.birthcentral.com.au

Dads and Doulas

Important Participants in Labour Support Team

Author Unknown

Many fathers want to experience the amazing world of the birth of their child. Dad wants to be actively involved, ease his partner's labour pain, welcome his baby at the moment of birth, and help care for his newborn at home. A labour Doula can help a father experience this special time, with confidence.

A father's participation in birth preparation classes or his presence at prenatal visits and in the delivery suite is a familiar occurrence. Yet, we sometimes forget that the expectations of his role as a "labour coach" may be difficult to fulfill. Sometimes it is also culturally inappropriate for an expectant father to be so intimately involved in the process of labour and birth.

The father-to-be is expected, among other things, to become familiar with the language and process of birth, to understand medical procedures and hospital protocols and be an advocate for his partner in an environment and culture he is usually unfamiliar with. A Doula can provide the information to help parents make appropriate decisions and facilitate communication between the labouring woman, her partner and medical care providers.

A partner may not understand a woman's instinctive behaviour during childbirth and may react anxiously to what a Doula knows to be the normal process of birth.

With a Doula, a father can share in the birth at a level he feels most comfortable with. The Doula's skills and knowledge can help him to feel more relaxed. If the father wants to provide physical comfort such as back massage, change of positions, and help his partner to stay focused during contractions, the Doula can provide that guidance and make suggestions for what may work best.

Many fathers are eager to be involved during the labour and birth. Others, no less loving or committed to their partner's well being find it difficult to navigate in uncharted waters. This is not about love, but about skill!

The benefits of Doula care have been recognised worldwide. The Medical Leadership Council of Washington, D.C., the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada and the World Health Organisation are among the many healthcare organizations that value the benefits that Doulas provide to women in labour.