

Support Partner in Birth



Highlights

A birth support partner provides assistance and emotional support during labor and birth.

Having a support partner can improve the birth experience and may reduce the need for pain relief, assisted birth, or a cesarean.

A support partner can be a spouse, family member, friend, or professional such as a doula.

Their role includes providing reassurance, helping with breathing techniques, offering massage, assisting with birth positions, and communicating with medical staff.

In This Article

What Is a Birth Support Partner?

Who Can Be a Birth Support Partner?

Can a Professional Birth Support Person Be Used?

Benefits of Having a Birth Support Partner

Choosing a Birth Support Partner

What to Expect as a Birth Support Partner

How a Birth Support Partner Can Help

Self-Care for a Birth Support Partner

Where to Find More Information

What Is a Birth Support Partner?

A birth support partner stays with the person giving birth, providing comfort and encouragement. Their presence can positively impact both the birthing experience and the newborn's well-being. Providing support during labor and delivery is both a responsibility and an honor. Those chosen for this role may benefit from learning about the birth process in advance to offer effective support.

Who Can Be a Birth Support Partner?

The choice of a birth support partner is personal and can include:

- A spouse or partner
- A close friend
- A parent, sibling, or another relative
- A doula \ (a professional birth support person\)

While many people choose their spouse or partner, it is not required. If someone may struggle with witnessing pain or discomfort, another support person may be preferable or serve as a backup.

Can a Professional Birth Support Person Be Used?

Yes, a doula is a professional birth support provider who offers emotional and practical assistance before, during, and sometimes after childbirth. While not a medical professional, a doula's role is to enhance the birth experience through guidance and reassurance.

Benefits of Having a Birth Support Partner

The presence of a support partner during labor may:

- Shorten the duration of labor
- Reduce the need for pain relief

Lower the likelihood of an assisted birth or cesarean
Increase confidence and improve overall birth experience

Choosing a Birth Support Partner

A birth support partner should be someone who makes the birthing person feel comfortable and safe. They should be:

Available when labor begins
Supportive, calm, and positive
Willing to advocate on behalf of the birthing person if needed
Able to follow the birth plan while remaining flexible

Some hospitals or birthing centers may have limits on the number of support people allowed, so it's advisable to check policies in advance. If someone is asked to be a birth support partner but feels unable to fulfill the role physically or emotionally, it's best to discuss this beforehand to allow alternative arrangements.

What to Expect as a Birth Support Partner

Preparation may include attending prenatal classes and reviewing the birth plan. Since births can be unpredictable, flexibility is important. The support partner may need to communicate with medical professionals and assist in decision-making if needed.

How a Birth Support Partner Can Help

During Early Labor:

Stay close to provide reassurance
Encourage light movement, such as walking
Offer food and water as needed
Track contractions

As Labor Progresses:

Offer encouragement and emotional support

- Assist with comfortable labor positions
- Guide breathing techniques and pain management strategies
- Provide massage, hand-holding, or cooling cloths
- Help with movement, such as getting into a bath or shower
- Keep the birthing person hydrated and nourished

Communication Support:

- Express the birthing person's wishes to the medical team
- Share updates on labor progress \ (if desired)\
- Assist in decision-making if unexpected situations arise

If a cesarean is needed, the support partner may also be present in the operating room, depending on medical policies.

After Birth:

Once the baby is born, the birth support partner can assist with:

- Supporting initial bonding and feeding \ (breastfeeding or bottle-feeding)\
- Caring for other children, if applicable
- Helping with newborn care tasks, such as soothing or bathing
- Providing emotional reassurance
- Assisting with household tasks

Self-Care for a Birth Support Partner

Supporting someone in labor can be physically and emotionally demanding. Taking short breaks, staying hydrated, and bringing snacks can help maintain energy levels. If planning to assist in water birth settings, bringing appropriate attire \ (such as swimwear)\ may be useful.

Tools and Assistance

For additional guidance on birth support roles:

- Consult with a healthcare provider, midwife, or doula
- Learn about labor, delivery, and birthing positions

Visit the birthing facility in advance to ask questions

Various resources are available to help birth support partners understand their role and prepare effectively.