

University Medical Center Doula Services

Thank you for choosing the UMC Doula Program! We are excited to work with you during this special, unique time. Listed below are a few ways to help your doula provide the best labor support for you!

What is the role as a doula?

A birth doula is a labor support person professionally trained to provide physical and emotional support during labor and birth.

A doula provides support, during pregnancy, labor, through birth, and for approximately 2 hours following the birth. The doula offers help and advice on comfort measures such as breathing, relaxation, movement, positioning, and massage. She also assists families with gathering information about the course of labor and their options. Her most critical role is providing continuous emotional reassurance and comfort.

Outside of the Doula's scope of practice.

They do not perform clinical tasks, such as blood pressure, fetal heart checks, vaginal exams, etc. They are there to provide only physical and emotional support and advocate for their client.

They do not make decisions for you. They will help you get the information you need to make your own informed decisions. They will also remind you if there is a departure from your Birth Plan, and will verify if this is, in fact, your informed decision

They will not speak to medical staff regarding matters where health care decisions are being made. They can discuss your concerns with you and suggest options. They can support you in discussions with staff as your advocate, making sure you have the opportunity to discuss concerns, but you or your partner will speak on your behalf to the medical staff.

The relationship between the doula and UMC:

The doula is an independent vendor and self-employed. She provides her doula service to UMC so that UMC can offer this free service to patients. The doula is working for you, not for your physician or the hospital.

Doula assignments at UMC.

Clients are assigned to a specific doula. A doula is assigned based on availability and a rotation list. Prior doula clients are welcome to ask for the doula they had with a previous birth. Please call early if you do want to request a doula you've utilized in the past. All other doula requests are on a rotation basis. The doula has 2 weeks to call you and introduce herself and set up a prenatal conference. This gives you an opportunity to meet your doula prior to delivery.

Prenatal Conference

You will have a prenatal meeting to review your Birth Plan, and gives you and the doula a chance to talk in detail about your preferences regarding your birth. The doula will ask about your knowledge of the birth process, and can provide information and education as needed. She will want to know your own personal ways of coping with pain and fatigue and difficult situations, and what internal resources we can draw upon to assist you with the birthing experience. She will want to know how you and your partner foresee working together, and the roles of others who may be attending the birth. We can discuss together what fears and concerns you have regarding the birth. We can review your preferences regarding the use of pain medications. The doula's role is to help you have a satisfying birth as you define it. The more we explore this in advance, the better she will be able to fulfill this role.

The doula will provide you with her contact information, phone number/s and email. She will discuss with you the best way to reach her during your pregnancy. She will also discuss the best way to reach her on the day of delivery.

Making the Most of Your Doula Support

Communication

Open and honest communication is key. Your doula can provide you with the best support if she is fully informed. If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to ask your doula. Doulas are well informed with pregnancy, labor and delivery. If your doula cannot answer your question due to her scope of practice or due to the uniqueness of your

situation, she will refer you to your provider or suggest you call triage at UMC Labor & Delivery (775-8800). Remember there is no such thing as too many questions with a doula! Ask away!

Once you begin weekly appointments, please contact your doula each week with an update. This will help you and your doula to get in the routine of communicating regularly and your doula can pass along helpful hints and reminders related to your stage of pregnancy.

If your physician schedules an induction, please notify your doula as soon as possible with the date, so she can plan accordingly.

Spontaneous Labor Support

Please contact your doula if you think you are in labor. Even if you plan to labor at home, let your doula know what is happening. This will allow your doula to arrange her schedule so that she can be fully available to you when you go to labor & delivery.

Text/call your doula when you leave home to go to labor & delivery.

Text/call your doula after you have been assessed in triage. Information such as dilation, whether or not your water has broken, how your contractions are feeling and if you will be admitted or observed is important to your doula and your support.

If you will be kept in triage for observation, text/call your doula once you are reassessed and know the care plan. If you will be discharged to labor at home, let your doula know. Otherwise, she will be wondering and worrying about you!

If you are admitted to labor & delivery, text/call your doula. You and she will make a plan for when she will join you. **It will take your doula approximately one hour to arrive at the hospital** from the time you request that she join you.

Induction Labor Support

If an induction becomes necessary, it can sometimes take many hours before you are in labor and in need of hands-on doula support. It is important that you maintain phone contact with your doula during this time. Keeping her updated on cervical exams, water breaking, increased contraction strength and frequency help her gauge when to join you. It can be hard for you to know when it is the right time for your doula to come up. Let her help you with that decision. Your doula can join you whenever you are ready for more physical and emotional support.

Epidural Support

Doulas are trained to support you if you have an epidural. Doulas help position you in ways that will help your labor to progress. Most importantly, doulas use specific positions if the nurse or doctor feels your baby is high in the pelvis or is “sunny side up.” These techniques and positions can sometimes help you avoid a C-section.

Once you have an epidural, you will remain in the bed. Your doula will help do the little things you can no longer do and she maintains the comfort level of your room by adjusting the lighting, the AC, providing aromatherapy, and holding the space so you and your support person/family can rest.

Back up Doula

Your primary doula will make every effort to be with you during labor. In the event that she cannot be with you due to emergency or unforeseen circumstances, she will arrange a backup doula and put you in contact with her.

If you change your mind and decide you do not want a doula, PLEASE notify your doula or Melissa Perez at 806.775-8234.