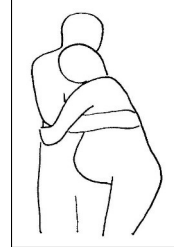


Having a support person during your labour and birth

Why have a support person?

A support person can help you to feel safe, calm and more in control. They can help pass the time during early labour and provide practical help. Your support person can talk on your behalf to hospital staff while you are busy labouring. Continuous support during labour can reduce the need for pain medications; the labour may be shorter, and there may be a lower risk of a c-section. A woman who is supported in her labour is more confident in caring for her baby.



Who is a good person to choose?



It needs to be someone you can trust, with whom you are comfortable and can be with for hours. The person needs to focus on you and the baby. A companion who is focused on taking a video, gets annoyed if you shout at them, panics at the thought of pain, blood or needles, or does not want to be there, is not a good choice for support. It could be your husband or partner, your sister, mother or a friend. You can also hire a trained support person called a doula. Some hospitals allow both your partner and a doula or other support person. Think about what you want and discuss it during your antenatal visits.

What does a support person do?

Advocate, reassure, provide physical comfort, and encourage you. During pregnancy talk with your support person about what you want and do not want during labour and birth. Write it down so your support person can show it to midwives and doctors if needed. Discuss how your support person can help you make a decision if your views change or there is an unexpected situation. Bring your support person to antenatal classes or share material with them that you are reading about labour and birth. Practise comforts that your support person can assist with such as massage, breathing, positions for labour and birth, ways to support you when walking around, and encouraging words in a calm voice. Your support person needs to take care of themselves so that you are not worrying about them. Talk about taking breaks, food and fluids that they can bring and comfortable clothing.



What if a C-section is needed?

For most c-sections the anaesthesia used allows the woman to be awake and therefore she needs support. If section is planned for you discuss before the birth how support will be best used. An emergency c-section can be frightening. Continuing the support being provided during labour can be calming.



When your baby is born your support person can assist you to hold your baby in skin to skin contact.

This is general information. Discuss your specific needs with your midwife or doctor.