

Practical Doula Care



Though you may understand your role as a postpartum doula, it may feel different when it is applied. The purpose of this section is to give you some ideas about how to apply that understanding into confident and compassionate postpartum support. Each family is unique and therefore each will have different needs. As you become more experienced you will find it easier to interact with families and meet their needs. Always remember S.U.P.P.O.R.T. when working with families.

A Daytime Visit

- Arrive 5-15 minutes earlier than your scheduled visit.
- Show genuine delight for the baby. Praise her for the work she did giving birth.
- Ask how she and the baby are managing together.
- Ask if she has eaten yet. If not, offer to prepare some food for her.
- Find out what special needs she has for this visit. Sleep? Help with feeding? Bathing the baby? Caring for other children? Doing the wash?
- Bring her a snack and drink while she feeds her baby. Let her know how well she is doing. Offer any assistance if requested. Keep her company.

- Burp and change the baby's diaper while she takes a nap or takes a shower between feeds.
- Fold a basket of baby laundry if the baby settles in to sleep
- Help organize the nursery, pack the diaper bag, or set up nursing/changing stations in the living area and parents' bedroom if requested.
- Assist with pump assembly or washing any pump parts, bottles or pacifiers.
- Provide company as she feeds again. Ask if she would like you to prep the next meal before leaving.
- Set her up with a beverage and snack and help to settle her baby, if needed, before your visit ends.

Nighttime visit

- Arrive 5-15 minutes earlier than your scheduled visit.
- Ask, "How has your day been going? How is your baby?"
- Answer any questions she may have and find out what she needs for the night.
- Ask if she is breastfeeding, pumping breastmilk, or formula feeding.
- Encourage her to sleep as soon as she finishes feeding so she can get as much rest as possible.
- If the baby isn't already sleeping, encourage sleepy behavior with rocking and singing soothing melodies and nursery rhymes. Be sure to keep the environment dim and quiet. You may decide to go to the living room so his mother can sleep soundly and not stir if the baby cries or makes noises. Doula's may read or use the television but should keep things quiet to encourage rest
- If the baby wakes before her next expected feed, assuming she is not acting hungry, try alternative sources of comfort such as swaddling, rocking, swaying and singing.
- If the baby is hungry, take her to her mother to nurse. If the mother is formula feeding, give the baby milk. Take care of burping and changing the baby's diaper so her mother can get the maximum amount of rest.
- If the mother is nursing or pumping at night, bring her a drink and assemble the pump if needed.

- Wash any bottles or pump parts used
- Empty or load a dishwasher, switch a load of laundry or fold a basket of laundry if her baby is settled. Be sure not to disturb the sleeping family
- If the parents are formula feeding, prepare bottles and formula, as instructed by the parents.
- Settle the baby as best you can before leaving. Bring the baby to where the parents are resting if they desire, or have them come down to the living area 5-10 minutes before the visit ends.
- Wish them well until you are scheduled to come again.

Keep the communication open with clients to ensure you are meeting their needs. Ask them what support they expect between visits (some like phone support while others only need the practical support during visits) to be sure you are on the same page. If multiple doulas are working with a family, not uncommon for families of multiples requiring a lot of support, keep a notebook for each doula to make notes. This will help everyone be on the same page.

Application and Understanding

1. For each letter of S.U.P.P.O.R.T give an example of how you would apply that to a visit with a typical client.
2. Upon entering the home of your client what is the first thing you should do?
 - a. Pick up clothes and toys to clean the room
 - b. Smile and show delight for the mother and baby.
 - c. Do the laundry
 - d. Offer to take her baby for awhile so she can get some rest.