

**Cooper welcomes doulas as an important part of the healthcare team for our pregnant patients (you) and your families.** This guide is intended to ensure a supportive, healthy, and safe environment for you, your healthcare staff, and your doula.

**What is a doula?** Doulas are trained professionals who offer emotional and physical support to pregnant patients and their families. They help with comfort measures and encourage patients and families to actively participate in discussions about their care. They are part of the care team and work together to create the most satisfying birth experience for patients and their families.

Doulas cannot perform clinical or medical tasks, make assessments, or diagnose a medical condition. This means that they are not able to take your vital signs, apply or remove your fetal heart monitor or oxygen, or help you out of bed without first checking with your nurse or doctor. They cannot give medical advice or opinions and will be asked to respect the medical expertise of the medical experts and providers caring for you throughout your pregnancy and delivery.

If you choose to have epidural anesthesia to control labor pain, your doula will be asked to step out of your room during that sterile procedure. If your baby is to be delivered by planned cesarean section, due to space limitations, your doula or one support person may accompany you. If general anesthesia becomes necessary, no one will be allowed in the operating room with you.

**Teamwork is key.** Let your healthcare provider know about your labor and birth care wishes, including your decision to have a doula for support. Your doula will work together with your hospital care team to make sure your care and comfort needs are met. Your safety is our priority and since some activities may require checking in with the hospital team first, it will be important that you, your support person(s), your doula, and your hospital care team stay in communication throughout your hospital stay to discuss any necessary updates to your plan of care.

If a doula cannot or does not follow these guidelines they may be asked to no longer participate in a patient's care and leave the patient areas. The hospital team strives for an open and comfortable partnership in meeting your care needs. Feedback is welcomed and additional information is available from Cooper's Doula Liaison, who may be contacted by calling the hospital's main number (856.342.2000) and asking the hospital operator to be connected with the Doula Liaison or by email at: [Doulas@CooperHealth.edu](mailto:Doulas@CooperHealth.edu).