

FACTFILE: GCSE HOME ECONOMICS: Child Development



Role of the Birthing Partner

Learning Outcomes

Students should be able to:

- Describe the role of the birthing partner.

What do new dads have to say about the birth?

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/pages/what-your-birth-partner-can-do.aspx>



Who is a birthing partner?

The birthing partner is anyone who will be with the pregnant woman during labour. If they are having a hospital birth most will only allow one person to be present at the birth. Some women may have the baby's father present at the birth; others will have a friend or relative.

What is the role of the birthing partner?

The main role of the birthing partner is to encourage the woman throughout labour. There are many other ways they can help such as:

- Being prepared by reading up on what will happen during the birth and planning how they will get the mother to the hospital and what they will need to bring;



- Monitor how regular the contractions are. It will be helpful if they keep a record of these contractions and phone the midwife when necessary;
- Take the mother to the hospital;
- Ensure the mother's wishes are followed as much as possible. The birthing partner could have a copy of the birth plan and be familiar with it;
- Keep the mother calm and relaxed. This will help her retain her energy which will be vital for the later stages of labour. Breathing exercises or massages learnt from antenatal classes may help;

- Reassure the mother throughout. She may feel that she cannot do it but some encouragement and support may go a long way;



- If the baby needs extra care they may be taken to the Special Care Baby Unit. The birthing partner could keep the mother updated on the baby's progress until she can go down to the unit herself;



- Help the mother feel comfortable by offering her sips of water and cooling her down with a cold facecloth;
- Listen to the mother. If she has any questions or concerns ask the midwife;
- Give the mother time to relax. This may be important if an epidural has been used as it slows the labour down. The mother should take time to rest so she has enough energy to deliver the baby;
- It is important for the birthing partner to be there for the mother but also give her space if she needs it;
- If the mother needs a caesarean section she may feel worried and out of control. The birthing partner could reassure the mother and be there to hold her hand through the operation;

- Take a photo of the newborn to remember the birth but remember the mother needs to be happy for the birthing partner to do this.

