

Common doula mistakes and questions to ask

The most common mistakes people make when hiring a doula are easy to avoid. Ask the right questions early and you get the right support.

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Here are mistakes to watch for when you hire a doula, and questions to ask.

Mistake: not checking what is included in the price

A doula quotes a package price. You assume it covers everything. Later you learn that postpartum visits or travel cost extra.

Ask ahead: what does your fee include? How many prenatal visits? How many hours of labour support? Do you offer a postpartum visit? What costs extra?

The typical published flat-rate birth package in the United States is \$450 to \$1,800, with a median of \$1,100. The typical hourly rate for postpartum support is \$35 to \$55, with a median of \$45. Use the doula cost estimator on this site to see the typical published range. Prices in big cities can be higher. Prices outside the United States differ.

Mistake: not asking about backups

A doula is one person. If they are ill or at another birth when you go into labour, who covers for them? Ask whether they have a backup arrangement with another doula.

Ask: do you have a backup doula? Can I meet them beforehand?

Mistake: assuming Medicaid coverage means free care

In the 26 US states and Washington, DC that reimburse doula services through Medicaid, the state programme pays. But the doula must be enrolled with the state or its managed-care plans. Coverage does not guarantee access. KFF Health News reports that fewer than 1 percent of Medicaid births in Virginia used a doula in the first two years of the programme.

Ask: are you enrolled with my state Medicaid plan? If not, can you help me find someone who is?

Mistake: not checking availability

A doula may take only a limited number of clients at a time. If you call late, your doula may be booked.

Ask: are you available around my due date? What happens if I go early or late?

Mistake: skipping the intro call

A doula relationship is personal. A short call can tell you more than a website. Notice whether the doula listens and explains clearly.

Ask: can we have a short call before I decide? What can I expect from working with you?

Mistake: thinking a doula replaces medical care

A doula is a trained nonmedical companion. They do not diagnose, prescribe or perform medical procedures. Always keep your midwife, doctor or other licensed clinician.

Mistake: not researching free options

Community doula programmes can provide free or low-cost support. This site lists several in the United States and the United Kingdom. Some are nonprofits or charities. Open Arms Perinatal Services and Neighbourhood Doulas are two that state they offer free support. These facts come from each programme's own site and are not yet owner-reviewed. Check each provider page.

Browse the community doula programmes category on this site. Use the free or low-cost support filter to find programmes. Ask each one who it serves.

Frequently asked questions

What if I cannot afford a doula?

Community doula programmes can provide free or low-cost support. Filter listings for free or low-cost support and look at the community doula programmes category. Ask each doula whether they offer other ways to pay.

Is it too late to hire a doula?

It depends on the doula. Ask each one about availability around your due date. A postpartum doula supports a family after the baby arrives, so ask when they can start.

Do I still need a midwife or doctor if I have a doula?

Yes. A doula is a nonmedical companion. They do not replace a midwife, nurse or doctor. Always have a licensed clinician for your medical care.

Sources

[Bornbir - How Much Does a Doula Cost? \(2026 Prices\)](https://www.bornbir.com/doula-cost) — <https://www.bornbir.com/doula-cost>

[DONA International - What is a doula](https://www.dona.org/what-is-a-doula-2/) — <https://www.dona.org/what-is-a-doula-2/>