

# Mothers and Babies

## Mothering The Mother

®

(NAPSA)—Expectant and new mothers need “mothering” too. At a time when hospital stays are brief and extended family support may be limited, trained caregivers called *doulas* provide something special: continuous emotional and physical support during pregnancy and labor—even follow-up care at home.

In a recent national survey of new mothers, *doulas*, or trained labor assistants, ranked the highest of all caregivers for childbirth support. Yet only five percent of women received this specialized attention.

The custom of “mothering the mother” is an ancient tradition still practiced in most of the world’s cultures. The benefits are being rediscovered in the United States—and many hospitals now encourage or incorporate *doula* services in their programs. A growing number of insurance companies now cover the costs and services often available on a sliding scale.

With a *doula*, the mother is never left alone during labor and delivery. After the birth, some *doulas* offer assistance with new-

born care and daily responsibilities such as shopping, cleaning and errands.

This kind of care can lead to dramatic improvements in the health and well-being of both mother and child. Research shows the help of a *doula* can:

- Shorten the length of labor
- Reduce the chance of cesarean section by as much as 50 percent
- Decrease the need for medications
- Help fathers feel more confident and involved
- Increase the success of breastfeeding
- Heighten interaction between mother and child
- Lower the risk of postpartum depression

Women seeking *doula* services should:

- Consult with their obstetrician or midwife
- Check on insurance coverage
- Meet the *doula* in advance to make sure it’s a good match
- Consider follow-up care at home

For more information on pregnancy and newborn care visit [www.JJPI.com](http://www.JJPI.com).