

Pain Relief in Labour: Video transcript

Pain Relief Options – Support Person

Hello. My name is Denise and I am a midwife at the Women's and Children's Hospital.

While you may not think of a support person present during labour as a form of pain relief it actually is.

Research has shown that labouring women who had a support person with them at all times had more positive birth experiences, needed less pain relief and had fewer Caesarean sections as well as assisted deliveries.

The support person has many different roles. They are able to provide emotional support but may also be able to assist with breathing or mindfulness techniques, changing positions or moving about, holding heat packs where needed and giving reassuring touches or even massage.

The support person does not have to be medically trained but should be chosen wisely. It is often the partner but doesn't have to be. Occasionally partners are uncomfortable being in the room during a labour and may even be traumatised if pressured to stay against their wishes. In situations such as this a family member or friend may be a better choice. It may also be beneficial to have more than one support person present.

It is possible to arrange a professional support person, known as a doula. They usually don't have any medical qualification but offer their services to help labouring women through the birth.

If a doula is desired this would have to be privately arranged before labour and paid for. The Women's and Children's Hospital are not able to arrange a doula for patients.

The Women's and Children's Hospital recommends no more than two support people in the room at any one time. There may be occasions when staff request family and friends briefly sit in the waiting room.

The hospital hopes a happy balance can be found between labouring women having the support people they need and the staff being able to safely care for both mother and baby.