



# BIRTH ASSISTANT COURSE

EMPOWERING MIDWIFERY EDUCATION

## Practical Application Tips from Another Birth Assistant

When do I get the call? Every midwife is different, they may have you go along with them when they head to a labor, others will not have you come until mom is active and heading towards the second stage in the next hour or two.

I spend an average of 2-10 hours at a birth, but this can vary widely from practice to practice and birth to birth. When you are on call, keep your phone near you, fully charged or charging, with the ringer on. Do not head more than an hour out of town without making arrangements to cover on call times. Once you arrive at the birth, make sure your phone is silenced and tucked away.

Keep a bag handy for yourself with a water bottle, snacks and mints or gum, deodorant and an extra outfit. Unless a midwife specifically asks you to carry birth supplies or tools, you should not need those things. Ask the midwife what is appropriate for you to have on hand.

Wear layers of comfortable dark clothes that dry easily. The room temp may change with the mama so be prepared. When assisting, I do lots of manual labor, charting and random acrobatics since at home births moms can birth wherever they please (on the floor of a small bedroom, for example). Bring an extra set in case you accidentally take a dive in the birth pool while checking fetal heart rate, or dump a soiled blue pad in your lap while taking out the trash...

Wear gloves! Keep an extra pair in your pocket or close by during the second stage especially. It may feel foreign to someone who has never been in the medical field, but it is necessary. Protect yourself, the mother, and the newborn.

Write down everything WITH TIMES, if the chart is not handy, jot notes on scratch paper, a strip of tape on your pant leg etc. You may think it will be easy to remember and chart later, but at your second birth in 24 hours at 3 am, it'll be tougher than you realize. Have a watch or timepiece of some sort handy for this

reason. You are the timekeeper. When you chart, initial after every note. If you make a mistake, strike through with one line so it can still be read and initial.

Read directions on setting up Birth Pools, if possible, practice setting one up and taking it down. Some midwives have the birth assistant do this, others let the family take responsibility for this. Speak to an experienced assistant or midwife for some tips and tricks. It can be helpful to know the ins and outs of filling and draining the tubs before heading to your first birth.

Attached is a sheet I use as a checklist when I set up the Midwifery Matters Birth Center for a delivery, and clean it up afterwards. We have a simplified checklist in every labor and delivery record, but this is more detailed, which is very helpful the first few births you go to. A lot of the things on this list apply to home births as well. Every midwife and their supplies are unique, so ask the midwife you work for how they would like you to set up.

Sometimes moms have special circumstances and need medical assistance. If a mom transfers in, you may need to accompany her to the hospital to provide emotional and informational support like a doula. If you haven't received any doula training, I suggest seeking out a training in your area, or reading some labor support books. Although a birth assistant and doula's roles should be kept separate, it can still be helpful to have the skills and training if need be.

We are all learning at every birth. Because every woman and every birth is unique, no two births look exactly the same and we learn something new at every one. Be gracious with yourself if you don't know what to do, and don't be afraid to ask questions or pull the midwife aside for clarification. It's ok to let the midwife know if you are not comfortable doing something, for instance – if you do not have much experience taking FHR and don't want to take too long finding it. Ask the midwife for more practice or training in areas you feel you are lacking – for example, practice some neonatal resuscitation with your team and supplies. Open, calm, communication is key.

Keep track of your certifications and when they expire. We hold NRP trainings and other educational opportunities often here at Midwifery Matters, make sure you like the Facebook page to keep up to date on events.