

Pregnancy and Birth Companion

Evidence-Informed Benefits,
Birth Preparedness, Emergency Readiness,
Community Support and the Role of
MomConnect

*"Supporting every woman through
pregnancy, childbirth and beyond."*

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MomConnect

Objectives

By the end of this webinar participants should be able to:

- Understand the concept of pregnancy and birth companionship.
- Describe the evidence-based benefits of birth companions.
- Explain birth preparedness and complication readiness.
- Recognise the importance of community support.
- Understand how MomConnect supports pregnant women and families.
- Identify practical actions to strengthen respectful maternity care.



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Background

Although significant progress has been made:

- Maternal mortality remains a public health concern.
- Preventable complications continue to occur.
- Delays in accessing care contribute to poor maternal and newborn outcomes.
- Many women still experience childbirth without emotional or practical support.

Every woman deserves:

- Respect
- Dignity
- Information
- Emotional support
- Safe, quality care



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Why Pregnancy and Birth Companion?

A birth companion is:
A trusted person chosen by the pregnant woman to provide continuous emotional, informational and practical support throughout pregnancy, labour, childbirth and the postnatal period.

Examples include:

- Husband/partner
- Mother
- Sister
- Friend
- Trained doula
- Community caregiver
- The choice always belongs to the woman.



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What Does a Birth Companion Do?

A birth companion provides

- Emotional Support
- Physical support
- Informational support
- Advocacy



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Evidence-Informed Benefits

Research consistently shows that continuous labour support results in:

- ✓ Higher likelihood of normal vaginal birth
- ✓ Reduced need for Caesarean section
- ✓ Reduced use of pain medication
- ✓ Shorter labour
- ✓ Greater maternal satisfaction
- ✓ Improved breastfeeding initiation
- ✓ Better newborn outcomes

Benefits for Families

Birth companions also benefit families by:

- Improving father/partner involvement
- Strengthening family bonds
- Increasing confidence in newborn care
- Supporting maternal mental health
- Encouraging shared parenting responsibilities



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Birth Preparedness

Birth preparedness means planning for a safe delivery.

Birth preparedness is not solely the woman's responsibility; it requires support from families, communities, healthcare providers and the health system.

Planning saves lives.



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Choose a health facility



Attend antenatal care



Save emergency contact numbers



Arrange transport



Save money for emergencies



Identify a birth companion



Pack a maternity bag



Know danger signs



Have a postnatal plan

Emergency Readiness



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Community Support

Healthy pregnancies are everyone's responsibility.



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The Role of Healthcare Workers

Healthcare providers should:

- Welcome birth companions
- Respect women's choices
- Communicate clearly
- Promote respectful maternity care
- Encourage shared decision-making
- Educate families on birth preparedness



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What is MomConnect?

MomConnect is South Africa's national maternal messaging programme.

It provides pregnant women with:

- Free health information
- Pregnancy stage-specific messages
- Newborn care advice
- Breastfeeding support
- Child health information
- Health service feedback opportunities



MomConnect Supports Birth Preparedness



**Families benefit because women
receive trusted information on:**

**Nutrition
HIV services
TB screening
Immunisation
Breastfeeding
Mental wellbeing
Family planning
Infant care**



MomConnect

Community Role in Promoting MomConnect



Every woman deserves...



KEY MESSAGES



RESPECT



DIGNITY



CONTINUOUS SUPPORT



ACCURATE INFORMATION



A SAFE BIRTH EXPERIENCE



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Call to Action

Let us all commit to:

- Promoting birth companionship
- Encouraging birth preparedness
- Supporting emergency readiness
- Strengthening community participation
- Registering every eligible pregnant woman on MomConnect
- Providing respectful maternity care

Together we can improve maternal and newborn health.



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Thank You

Questions & Discussion



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