

Annie's story

I was 14 days overdue with my first baby when I went into hospital to be induced. The labour took a total of two days, it was very tiring and became particularly painful when I was put on a drip to keep the labour going. I begged for an epidural but by the time the anaesthetist arrived I was too far along. Unfortunately, despite my best efforts, my son was born by ventouse because I could not push him out by myself. He was in the 'back-to-back' position and weighed almost 11lbs.

Just as I breathed a sign of relief that it was all over, things got worse as I began to haemorrhage. My cervix was torn and my uterus was too tired to contract back down. I had other tears including an extended episiotomy and the registrar was so busy trying to halt the bleeding that he must have forgotten a person was actually attached to the body he was working on. I would describe what was done to me as unbearable pain, except I did not have a choice, I had to bear it. The registrar was pushing swabs forcefully into the tears and, I was later, told also had both hands inside me trying to get a good look at my cervix. I had no pain relief whatsoever throughout this.

It was also very, very frightening because apart from the blood, my vision went and I could not breathe in, as well as feeling more ill than I ever had in my life. I could not even speak to ask the Dr to leave me alone, although I accept he was trying to help me. Eventually I was taken into theatre and given a general anaesthetic and blood transfusions.

The experience has taken a long time to come to terms with. Afterwards, I was so shocked I felt numb for a long time. I knew I loved my new son but I could not connect with the feeling. I felt I had let myself down for feeling the pain so much and for being a wimp. I blamed myself for not having a 'good' birth. I felt a sense of shame about what I had been through, almost as if I should apologise to the doctors and midwives. Everytime my husband left me alone I was terrified something would happen to him, like a car crash. Physically, it was weeks and weeks until I felt anything close to normal.

My expectation of birth has understandably lowered a lot. I want my son to have a brother or sibling, but all I can hope for is less pain this time and to survive the experience. That will sound melodramatic - but woman who have had similar experiences will understand.