

Emma's Story

Hi I'm Emma and I'd like to tell you my birth story. I planned a home birth but at 13 days overdue I was advised to go into hospital and as it was my first child I agreed.

When I got there I was given a gel pessary and told to wait, at teatime I was given another and by ten pm I was in lots of pain. I asked for my husband who had had to go home because of visiting hours but they said they wouldn't call him yet because I wasn't in proper labour even though we live a long way from the hospital. I felt scared and alone.

The pain got worse and I kept asking for them to examine me to see how far I was dilated but they kept telling me that not much would have changed and the midwife suggested I take some sleeping pills. I did because I felt pressured and then she ran me a bath saying the water might ease the pain. I got in and felt all drowsy, I fell asleep, when I woke up, my face was under the water, they'd forgot to check on me!

Anyway my waters broke as I turned over in bed I buzzed but no-one came I stood around all wet and embarrassed for about 10-15 minutes until I got someone's attention. All my fears of a hospital birth were coming true.

Soon afterwards I was examined and they found my cervix was 6 cm so they finally called my husband and I taken down to the delivery suite. I asked about what pain relief was available because I hadn't thought about it as I'd planned a natural birth at home. Soon I was given an injection of diamorphine without my consent! I only got chance to ask what it was and that's as she was coming towards me with the needle. I didn't really realise what the midwife had done until I felt really weird and sleepy. It was awful, I felt drunken and I was slurring my words, it was actually quite scary.

At about 10.30am I felt the urge to push, by this time I was exhausted and groggy because of the injection I'd had. I started to push and I thought 'great this'll be all over soon', but at 12.30am nothing had happened so they put a drip in my arm to speed things up. I knew that nothing would happen, I could just feel it. The syntometrine drip made the contractions unbearable and I told them to turn the drip off. They refused. I was in so much pain I cried, hysterically, I wanted to die and thought I would I was in such intense pain. After around a hour I was taken to theatre and given a spinal block and they tried the ventouse but my baby still didn't appear so I was given a c-section.

At 2.16pm my daughter Abigail came into the world. I was quickly sewn up and left in the recovery nurse with just an anaesthetic nurse. I was desperate to breastfeed my baby but I hadn't a clue and neither had the nurse. I waited for a midwife but none came so I gave it a go. Luckily my daughter greedily obliged.

Finally I was taken to the post-natal ward and was disgusted to find I was in the same room my sister had had six months previous and it had the same blood stain on the wall as it had had then! The wards were dirty I had to change my own bed sheets and soon after I caught an infection. I was treated with antibiotics and discharged 6 days later.

The following week my lochia changed and I knew something was wrong because it was like proper blood. I complained to the community midwives but nothing was done they said it was just normal. Seventeen days after birth I got up, got dressed went down stairs sat down to dress my daughter. As I stood up I felt

liquid pouring down my leg, I looked down it was blood. Lots and lots of blood I was scared and my husband was out so I ran next-door-but-one to my sisters house who called a midwife.

When she arrived she asked to see the pad I was wearing but I'd almost stopped bleeding so she said it was probably an infection. She asked how much blood there had been but didn't believe me when I told her how much, she said 'There always looks more blood than there is' and told me not to call until I'd been bleeding heavily continuously for an hour. She got me anti-biotics from the doctors and left.

At about 6pm I stood up and again blood started pouring from me. I didn't want to be a bother so I waited as I'd been instructed and as it was my first baby I didn't know any better but after 20 minutes my lounge looked like a murder scene. I was so afraid I tried to follow the midwives instructions but my husband called an ambulance.

Soon afterwards it came and I answered the door. I passed out. I came round and they were putting a drip in my arm. I passed out again. In the ambulance I asked the paramedics if I was going to die, he joked but I knew by the amount of blood I'd lost and by his face that I was in trouble. I looked at my daughter and started praying to God to let me live and asking Him that if I died please would He look after my baby. We got to the hospital and I was rushed into the delivery ward and given a hormone drip to try and stop the bleeding and a blood transfusion. It wasn't working and I was drifting in and out of consciousness. I asked again if I was going to die. That's the last thing I remember.

I woke up five days later in ICU and was told that the bleeding wouldn't stop so I was given an emergency hysterectomy. Even after that my blood wouldn't clot because I'd lost so much, so I was kept sedated on a ventilator until they could stop it. I apparently had to be taken back to theatre 3 times and my family was warned to prepare themselves for my death because the chances of me recovering were slim.

I did recover though but I was a massive shock although I spent the first week afterwards in shock! I was told that in the time I'd been sedated I'd had over 92 units of blood and several units of this really expensive clotting factor. I remember them giving me my baby to hold for the first time afterwards and immediately she turned her head to my breast for milk because I'd been breastfeeding her. I couldn't give her what she wanted though and my husband took her and gave her a bottle. At that moment I felt so guilty and inadequate even more because she looked so thin and pale. My sister told me how formula milk had made my baby ill and she kept being sick so my sister who was breastfeeding gave her some of her milk!

I also got DVT afterwards and the blood clots were large and painful. I had to take the blood thinner warfarin and have regular blood tests. About 3 months after it happened I started suffering from PTSD and felt terrible. Anxious and scared and had very vivid memories. I got cognitive behavioural therapy (cbt) but had to wait about 8 months for it and it didn't work much. In fact the only thing that made me feel better was going to church and meeting Jesus.