

Jenny's story

I gave birth in a hospital which has won awards for being 'baby friendly' - hah! What a laugh!

I went into labour 9 days overdue (although when my baby was born, the midwives felt that I was more overdue than that), following a membrane sweep the day before. When I'd had the membrane sweep, my blood pressure had been a bit high, so my midwife recommended I go straight to the hospital to be monitored and maybe induced that day. At the hospital, they said that all was OK, but they booked me in for an induction the following night because I was so overdue.

So, I started having contractions at 4.21am on the Friday. They were coming on and off all day, but not really getting anywhere, so we went to the hospital at the prescribed time that night for our induction. The midwife examined me and said that I was 3cm dilated (which I thought was 'established' labour). I was hooked up to a machine, and she decided to induce me anyway, so I had a pessary inserted.

By this time the contractions were getting worse and worse, so I'm not sure if the pessary was really needed.

My husband was told to go home and they would call him if anything happened, but they didn't expect anything to happen till about 8 the next morning. So he attached the TENS machine and left. (We live 3 minutes drive from the hospital, so that didn't bother me too much).

The contractions got worse and worse, and all the midwives could say was that the first child always takes longer, so I wasn't really in labour! I couldn't sit or lie down, and the contractions were coming every 3 or so minutes, which the midwives knew because I was wandering round the corridors as I didn't want to disturb anyone sleeping in the wards.

I went to the loo and the world fell out - including the pessary. I went to tell the midwife (who was checking her emails and surfing the web!!!), and she said that they couldn't do anything about it, so to go to bed and get some sleep!

I couldn't sit or lie down or do anything but wander around (TENS machine on full blast, and giving me electric shocks, but preferable to the labour pains!!). My midwife just kept saying that there was no point in examining me because this was my 1st, and it'd be hours yet. How encouraging!

So my waters broke at 3am, and the midwife then consented to examine me - I was 9 cm dilated!!!! I went to the delivery suite and they called husband, who arrived in 5 minutes. I had asked for an epidural earlier, but the midwife had said it was too early. So I asked for one now, and she said it was too late, but why didn't I try aromatherapy oils?!

So I was on gas and air for the next 5hrs 45 minutes until Amy was finally born. I had been pushing for an hour and half when the mw suggested a ventouse. They took so long getting it set up and faffing around that an hour after that Amy began crowning.

She was born at 8.42am (5hrs 42 minutes after the midwife said it was too late for an epidural!!). I knew I had torn, but the midwife examined me and said that I needed a couple of small stitches and she'd go and run me a bath while they got that sorted.

When the lady doing the stitches arrived, the midwife said 'are you going to do it now', and she said 'do I have a choice?'. The midwife said 'not really', and the stitcher said 'well I guess I'll have to then, but I am very busy'. She took one look and told me that there would be a LOT of stitching, not just the couple of stitches I was told about. She asked what pain relief I'd had, and when she found I'd had none but gas and air, she gave me a local injection which hurt like buggery (sorry).

Immediately she began stitching. She didn't wait for the anaesthetic to kick in, she just got on with it. I told her it wasn't working, but she said it was!!!! So I was writhing around in agony (all the while my husband was sitting there holding a new baby). The stitcher told me that she was trying to stitch me nicely so that I would have 'nice experiences' in the future, but she couldn't if I kept writhing around like that! I had to stay still apparently! Yeah, right!

Eventually she let me have some more gas and air, and I passed out once. Then the midwife said 'what's that?' and they discovered a haematoma which would need to be drained in surgery.

So she finished off stitching as best she could with me wriggling round (!), and arranged for me to go to surgery. The anaesthetist arrived to ask what kind of anaesthetic I wanted (local or general). I plumped for the epidural (finally!!!!) and had to sign a disclaimer, which basically told me the hospital weren't liable if I died, was paralysed or was unable to use my 'lower portions' ever again!

They wheeled me into surgery and drained the haematoma. I passed out on the operating table. Then I was wheeled back into the delivery suite, where my husband had started the grieving process, and my poor little girl was looking scared and bewildered.

I was in the delivery suite 'recovering' for the afternoon before being wheeled into the ward in the evening. I think I still had the same bedding on the bed, and I noticed when I got back to the delivery suite, they had mopped up, but there was still my blood on the walls!

That evening, I had the grandparents and uncles come and visit. I was trying to breastfeed when I passed out again. They took my blood pressure, and it was something ridiculous like 90/60 or something (I thought I should've been dead!), so they wheeled me back into the delivery suite for a blood transfusion.

They pumped 5 units of blood into me over the next day, then wheeled me back into the ward where I was effectively told to get on with it.

I had wanted to breastfeed if I could (and I had put 'if I can' on the birth plan), but by this time my baby was starving. I had been breastfeeding her constantly all through this, but obviously with the trauma, there was nothing there. I asked the midwives if I could give her something else, but they refused to allow her to have any formula and I just had to keep going. For the next few nights, I didn't sleep a wink and neither did my baby really as she was just hungry and there was nothing I could do.

I have since learnt that the amount of blood I lost was equivalent to a major RTA, where normally I would be kept in for a week or more, with constant observation - even without a baby!! But as soon as I was on the ward, that was it - it was 'fend for yourself'. My poor husband who had to watch all this, then thought I'd died. Again, I was completely prepared for a painful and traumatic birth, but not this - and not with what I can only see as the incompetence of the staff at this 'baby-friendly' hospital.

No one ever explained to me what I had gone through, what a haematoma was or how common they were. I've had to find out for myself, and I still don't fully understand. All I know is that if we have another, I'm seriously thinking about changing hospitals - 3 minutes' drive or not!