

Mel's Story

I went into labour on 13th Feb in the afternoon. I had unbearable pain right from the beginning, there was no build up at all. I was sick and had diarrhoea for the first 24 hours. I went to hospital within the first few hours of the pain. They examined me but because I had not dilated enough I wasn't given any pain relief although I kept asking for it. Because of the sickness and diarrhoea the head midwife put me on a drip. She did it wrong and my arm started burning. I screamed for her to come back and when she did, she switched off the drip but left me attached to it. I still had to rush to the toilet on a regular basis and now with a drip attached it made it really difficult. I did not make it on one occasion and was sick all over the carpet in the hall way between the ward and the bathroom. I did my best to clean it up but the head midwife seemed really annoyed. I was left all night with no pain relief, still being sick and going to the toilet with the drip attached.

In the morning they attached a new drip to the other arm. This time it was fine. By lunch time on the 14th of Feb, I still had had no pain relief when I asked for it I was told that if I couldn't cope with it at this stage then how did I think I was going to go on at the actual birth? I had only got to 2cm and must wait until I was at least 5cm.

I was moved to a ward on my own because the staff were concerned that if I had a bug that I could pass it on to other people. By the afternoon of 14th Feb I was exhausted. I had had no sleep and had been in pain for 24 hours. Finally they gave me a Tens machine which did help a little.

My waters broke at 6.00pm on 14th Feb. I had a bath and when I got out of the bath a midwife came in while I was lay on the bed having a contraction and put the Tens machine back on. I screamed! She had electrocuted me because I was still wet.

During the night I begged for pain relief and the head mid wife gave me a shot of pethidine. It allowed me to dose / sleep for an hour or two during that night.

15th Feb. I was still only at about 3 to 4 cm but really not coping with the pain at all. Eventually a midwife brought me a cylinder of gas and air. It didn't do anything and she kept telling me I was doing it wrong. I later found out that the valve was faulty and so I spent another day with no pain relief.

I had now gone 2 days with no sleep and no pain relief, I was exhausted. I finally reached that all important 5cm and they moved me to the delivery ward. I was given gas and air and now I felt in control, I began to cope with the pain.

I had decided before I was in labour that I wanted an epidural and had asked for it from the start. I finally got it at around 9.00pm on 15th Feb. What a relief! I really do not understand why I couldn't have had this earlier. I would have been able to sleep which would have made all the difference.

At around 11.30pm a doctor came to see me. She said that because the labour had not progressed enough I had to have a c-section. I did not want this at all. However I understood that it was in the best interest of my baby so I signed.

They took me and my husband into the theatre. They topped up my epidural and were about to start when I felt the cold knife on my stomach. I told the surgeon. Everything stopped. Then the baby's heart stopped. My husband was rushed out. I

was given a general anaesthetic. Fergus was born at 12.33 on 16th Feb, he weighed 6lb 13oz. The next thing I knew it was around 3.30am 16th Feb, I woke up in recovery, my husband was there with this tiny baby in his arms. Fergus had survived and was perfect. He had been resuscitated by the head midwife, the one who had caused me so much distress earlier. So I felt guilty.

8.00am, 16th Feb. The nurses had me up, showered and changed into clean pyjamas. I really needed some sleep. I spent the next 4 days in hospital. Fergus cried all the time and I couldn't feed him enough. I realise now because I was so weak due to lack of food, sleep and the sickness etc. No one tells you this. I asked for a bottle of milk for him so I could rest and they looked at me like I had asked for a bottle of poison.

I still didn't get any sleep because he just wanted to feed all night and there was too much going on during the day to be able to sleep. I tried pulling the curtains round while Fergus was asleep and I had just started to drift when a nurse came in, opened all the curtains and slammed a jug of water on my table, shouting 'time you were up'. By the evening of the 18th Feb I was hallucinating due to lack of sleep. I would see other mums come in and go home and I was desperate to go home so that my husband could help me look after Fergus while I got some sleep.

On 19th Feb a consultant came to see me. He said I could go home and then asked if I had been to the toilet since Fergus was born. Of course I hadn't because I hadn't eaten anything since 13th. He told me I had to stay until I had been. I cried.

A different consultant came to see me later that day and let me go home. I didn't stop crying.

When the health visitor asked how I was I started to tell her that I wasn't coping and I felt miserable all the time. She warned me that if I continued to tell her that she could report me and my baby could be taken into care. Of course after that I told her everything was wonderful and it must have been a touch of the baby blues.

I felt like a failure because I couldn't give birth and I couldn't breast feed properly and I didn't love this baby. I felt like Fergus was adopted, hard to explain but he didn't feel like he was mine. I was really protective of him but at the same time I didn't want him I just wanted someone else to take care of him.

I think this is because of everything that happened and because I was under General anaesthetic when he was born I couldn't associate him with my bump I had carried round.

About a month ago I admitted that I have been depressed since he was born and I have been on antidepressants since then. I am also having counselling which has really helped and I feel much closer to my son. My husband has been very supportive from the start and I know we will get through this but I will never have another baby.

I feel that the hospital was extremely busy and under staffed. They didn't have time to listen to my needs.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and I hope it can in some way help other people.