A Natural Twin Hospital Birth: My Birth Story

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ABSTRACT

In this column, the author describes the vaginal birth of her twin daughters. Despite impending complications in the last weeks of her pregnancy that might have required a cesarean, this mother was committed to doing everything possible to give birth naturally. With the support of her husband as well as the obstetrician and the nurse, she was able to give birth to her daughters vaginally.

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When I found out I was pregnant with twins, I was in for my first ultrasound at 12 weeks. I hit the radiologist on the arm and told her to “shut up.” With no twins in the family, it came as quite a shock. My husband and I were ecstatic, scared, and overwhelmed all at the same time. That cocktail of feelings didn’t subside for the next 8 months . . . and it still hasn’t really left us.

I had a wonderful, easy pregnancy and I actually loved all the extra attention I received when people found out that there were two in there. I felt blessed and it was fun to share the news. When we found out they were both girls, we were over the moon happy.

I immediately knew I wanted to have a vaginal and medication-free birth. My mom had birthed my siblings and me naturally and so had my grandmother (she refused the gas—very rebellious for her time). However, no woman close to me had gone through a twin pregnancy and there were no childbirth education classes for multiples, so I relied on Facebook groups, books, and pregnancy centers for

most of my information on what it is like to carry and birth twins.

I did attend a Bradley class and had a very experienced teacher, which was helpful in preparing me for the type of interventions I might come across and how to prepare for coping through the pain of labor. However, it didn’t prepare me for complications caused by twin pregnancies, preterm labor, or the NICU, which is more than 60% of twin parents’ experience. We ended up in that 60%.

At 35 weeks, doctors became concerned that Baby B’s umbilical cord was gaining too much pressure. I went for two ultrasounds that week and then one the following Monday at 36 weeks. Each time, the cord pressure was getting higher and the phrase “emergency c-section” was being thrown around. A decision would be made on that Friday. On Tuesday, I went to my obstetrician and was 3 cm dilated. There was a 90% chance that I was going to have a cesarean surgery on Friday because of Baby B’s situation. We were given the option to strip my membranes to

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try and induce labor. We took it. I wanted to birth them vaginally if I could because I knew that during a vaginal birth, more fluid would be ejected from their lungs and they would have the hormones and antibodies they needed. This would be especially important because of their prematurity.

Nothing happened until Friday morning when I started to feel some cramping on and off. By the time we arrived for the ultrasound, I was having contractions 10 minutes apart. I'm not sure if it was due to being in early labor, or if something else had happened, but all of a sudden the pressure of the umbilical cord dropped. We were sent on our way with no cesarean surgery.

I was still in denial that I was in labor but my husband was not. He suggested we stay close to the hospital and get some lunch. While at lunch I had a few strong contractions: a big one, then 5 minutes later a very small light one, then 5 minutes later a big one. We decided to call my obstetrician. When I described the contractions, she said, "The little ones count! Come in and see us".

An hour later, I was in a hospital bed at 4 cm dilated and my contractions were getting stronger. I was very lucky to have an encouraging nurse on rotation who had birthed her own three children naturally. I was able to walk, take a shower, and get into the positions I wanted. My husband was amazing and was totally in control. I had an epidural catheter inserted in case I needed a cesarean but I didn't receive any medication. By 7:00 p.m., I was 6 cm dilated and in active labor. We decided to break my water and it all sped up from there. By 8:30 p.m., I was 10 cm and they wheeled me to the operating room. I was ready to push.

Birthed naturally in an operating room is a little difficult to do. I had to stay in the bed, and at

this point, I was so in my own head that I couldn't really think to try other positions. I did what the doctors told me. Instead of spontaneous pushing I succumbed to directed pushing based on a monitor showing my contractions. I was also pushing on my back. I was also pushing on my back and purple pushing, the later which caused broken capillaries all over my face. To make matters more difficult it turned out that Baby A was coming out sunny side up. Despite all these obstacles, I did it. An hour and a half later, Clara Jane was born and thirty minutes after that, Emilia Mae joined us. I got to hold and breastfeed both babies before they were whisked off to the NICU. Clara, at 4 lbs 14 oz, spent 3 days in the NICU and Emilia Mae, at 4 lbs 4 oz, spent 8 days.

I was very proud of myself for bringing my girls into the world as naturally as I could. It wasn't a perfect birth, and looking back, I do wish I had waited to see if I did need a cesarean surgery before trying to induce labor; however, I know I did the best I could with the information I had at the time. I now have two beautiful 2-year-old girls who are full of life, on track in their development, and in perfect health.

JAMIE LINN MUELLER is the founder of *Birthed Confidence*.

Preparing for Multiples the Family Way by Carter, Green, and Amis is a valuable resource for families expecting more than one baby (<http://www.thefamilyway.com>)