

You're having a homebirth? Isn't that risky? Is it safe?

These are the questions posed by family and friends when we told them that we are having a homebirth later this year. But rather than get defensive I chose to inform those close to me about our "choice". After all, this wasn't a decision made on a whim, it was a well thought out, educated decision.

You see, this is our second child and with our first, like the majority of pregnant couples in Australia we chose to have our first child in a private hospital under the care of an obstetrician. However in saying this we were fortunate enough to have our wonderful naturopath (who would become our birth attendant), to help educate us about natural birth and what this might look like in a hospital environment. She informed us of our "choices" despite the fact that we would be birthing our baby in a very controlled environment. Many of these "choices" we would have never been informed about by those in the hospital/obstetric world. After all, this is "our" birth we are talking about, so why wouldn't we be able to make choices about it?!

This information allowed us to prepare a very detailed birth plan and subsequently have a very good hospital birth experience. Our wonderful birth attendant and a very supportive midwife supported us through our natural birth with our obstetrician coming in purely for the delivery of our beautiful baby girl.

In the twelve months following the birth of our baby girl I studied with Rhea Dempsey, renowned birth educator, training to be a birth attendant myself. This is something I would never considered prior to the birth of my own child, but the support that I received from my birth attendant was paramount and I wanted to be able to offer this to other women.

In the group that I studied with I came across 10 women who had all experienced homebirth either themselves personally or in a support role for other women. I found this quite confronting at first as the world of homebirth was so far removed from my hospital birth experience! However over the next twelve months I began to see that the "choice" of a homebirth seemed to be such an appealing one.

In March this year I fell pregnant with my second child. This began to set my mind racing about what my birth "choice" will be this time. Not sure if I was totally confident about a homebirth, I considered the option of a birth centre. However living in the Western Suburbs of Melbourne and knowing that this second birth will quite possibly happen much quicker than the first, I knew that traveling to a birth centre on the other side of the city was not an option.

By this stage my husband and I knew that we didn't really want to go back to a hospital, so that left us to educate ourselves further about homebirth. I spoke with my naturopath and Rhea and both of them suggested that we go to a "meet the midwives" night at the Midwives Naturally group. We did this and that set the wheels in motion. We now have our two midwives in place, plus our birth attendant and our back up hospital booked in preparation for our homebirth later this year.

Like many people, we were not educated about homebirth and had to do our research in order to feel confident with our "choice". When we told our families about our decision we had to educate them also and they now understand that in no way would we make this "choice" if it meant putting ourselves or our unborn child at risk.

We are fortunate that we conceived our second child in time for us to be able to have this "choice" of a homebirth. If we were planning to have our baby after July 2010, our only "choice" could very well be just to go to hospital. How disheartening!

Please to not take this choice away from birthing women.