

Hi All,

I'm feeling rather honoured to be invited into this group! I wish Amy would do video links to her classes so I could join in up here in Yorkshire! Anyway following Amy's kind intro, here is my positive birth story, sorry it's so long!

💖 FTM - Planned home birth with transfer to hospital

💖 37+4 (Waters broke 37+2)

💖 Pippa Edith Parry 07.04.2019 6lb 5oz

I was terrified of giving birth and had delayed starting a family as a result. I've ridden horses all my life and my mum (no medical background!) has a theory that horsey girls carry babies well through pregnancy but struggle to deliver them! Lots of my horsey friends have indeed struggled (perhaps due to the strong core and pelvic floor muscles?) and were only too willing to off load their dramatic stories.

Anyway, I read Milli Hill's Positive Birth book over Christmas (20 weeks) thanks to Amy's recommendation which really resonated with my science brain and then found a fabulous hypnobirthing course. I became excited about giving birth and felt that a home birth was something I'd like, trying to ensure I felt safe, comfortable and could let the oxytocin flow! My husband was very sceptical initially, but once I'd explained the theory he understood my thinking. We joined the local Home Birth Group which was really helpful with practical tips. We even bought a birth pool via the group.

As a FTM I knew people would have their own opinions on a home birth so we didn't tell anyone, including grandparents-to-be, so there could be no negativity. We were very woolley over our 'due date' too, telling people it was the start of May when it was actually 24th April but I didn't want hassling if I did go over, which I was sure I would do!

37 weeks came and I still had 10 days at work. Due to some big family birthdays at the end of April, I had been saying to my bump that now we'd reached 'full term' they were free to arrive any time so they could join us at the parties....little did I know she was listening!

On 5th April (my birthday), I woke to find my waters had broken (37+2). I told my husband, rang the hospital and went in to be checked out. We had the day off work anyway and had arranged to go for lunch with my parents which we still did, although we didn't mention that baby was imminent! We had a fabulous lunch with a glass of fizz and a leisurely spot of shopping.

The hospital asked me to go back in after 24 hours for monitoring and to discuss an induction – the one thing I did not want. Nothing happened over night so I went back in for monitoring and all was as it should be. They discussed the options with me and the slight increased risk of infection due to my waters going but were happy for me to go home for another 24 hours and try get labour going naturally. Challenge accepted!

Home we went, I sent a few last work emails that had been bothering me, we enjoyed two good walks (6 miles in total), had a lovely lunch and dinner, a glass of wine and then made a nest in our sitting room – set up the birth pool, lit candles and the fire, rubbed clary sage oil on my bump, watched a couple of rom coms and had lots of cwtches aka cuddles (husband is Welsh!), before an early night.

Went to bed at 9.30 and slept heavily until being woken by a contraction at 1.15am, definitely the real thing so I moved back down to our nest. I started timing them, they were 5 mins

apart, lasting 30 seconds, but this soon moved to 4 mins and 45 seconds, by 2am I had to wake my husband to put my TENS machine on. I alternated between my gym ball and all fours, using the up breathing to help with the surges. The good thing about a planned home birth is that you have a positioning scan at 37 weeks so we knew baby was in the right place and was unlikely to have turned which helped put my mind at ease.

At 3.10 we rang the hospital so they could warn the midwife on call. I think they thought 'FTM, panicking, she'll be ages yet' and told us to ring back when I was in established labour. They did say that if baby was born at home, as waters had been gone over 24 hours before, we'd need to transfer for 12 hours of monitoring.

At 4am surges were a minute long and 2 to 3 minutes apart. We rang back asking for the midwife to come out – mainly as I wanted to use the gas and air that had been delivered!

At 4.20 the midwife on call rang, the one I didn't particularly like from my ante natal appointments (typical!) and she was 45 minutes away. As my surges were coming thick and fast, we used BRAIN and decided to head into the hospital as it was only 20 mins for us. I actually had my only wobble around the time of this phone call and looking back think it may have been me transitioning as I was getting the urge to push!! I wasn't sure whether I could actually get in the car at this point so sent my husband on a few errands – feed the horses, let the dog out, fetch my slippers from upstairs etc, so I could get back in control of my breathing. This worked, Adrenalin kicked in and my surges slowed/became more manageable.

5am – arrived at hospital and instantly felt comfortable with our amazing mid wife - Oxytocin started flowing well again. Sadly the pool was in use - had I known this I may have stayed at home but it really didn't matter in the end!

I didn't want any examinations so just carried on up breathing, swaying, kneeling on the floor and resting my arms on the bed. It was like an out of body experience, I was so calm and in the zone I barely noticed anything else and just went with my body. My husband fed me jelly babies and gave me drinks between surges. I've got my maternity notes (you can request these) and they state how calm and relaxed I am.

6.15 I started using gas & air which helped me breath through the contractions and at 6.45 felt really strong pressure. Asked for an examination, as was thinking I may need more pain relief if not so far along. I was 8cm – immediately felt like I was on the home straight and could cope with just gas and air, and even better the amazing midwife would be there to deliver our baby before the shift change at 8!

7.10 my body started pushing (strangely the same feeling I had at home before we left for hospital!) so I moved on to the bed, remained on all fours and lent over the back. Also decided it was probably a good time to remove my pants!

By 7.45 our baby girl had arrived! I can honestly say that it was not painful, just an unbelievable pressure. I could feel her moving down and bobbing back but knew this was nature working its magic, I trusted my body to birth my baby so didn't try over push on the contractions. I am sure this, the perineum massage I did from 33 weeks and the reverse pelvic floor exercises I did helped me to avoid any grazes and stitches (still amazed at this!). Blowing my mum's theory out of the water at least!

Had immediate skin to skin and delayed cord clamping. The cord was actually quite short, and waiting to cut the cord was probably the most uncomfortable part of the whole thing. I requested the injection to deliver the placenta, had wanted a natural delivery but really didn't care by that point!

Sadly mid afternoon our little girl started breathing erratically and was taken round to Special Care Baby Unit. Turns out she had a chest infection and so we stayed in for 5 days. This potential nightmare, I now see as a positive as we established our breastfeeding and got to grips with parenting in the safety of the hospital.

The whole birth was absolutely amazing and I am sure it's due to the prep we did beforehand. Understanding the science and our birth options empowered me to have a birth I never thought possible. I have told so many people about it and for every dramatic TV style birth story I hear, I proudly tell my story to try reassure other pregnant ladies.

I'm already looking forward to our next baby and although I'm sure it will be very different, I know to trust my body and go with my gut instinct; just because you're a FTM doesn't mean you won't have a fast labour, I am sure if I had stayed at home Pippa would have been born much sooner!