

## **Anya's Birth Story**

Since there were some aspects about Mia's birth (Anya's big sister) that I didn't really like, most of which I attributed to having been administered too many drugs while in labor, it was a goal of mine to have a drug-free delivery with Anya. I was also anticipating that I would need to be self-sufficient quickly after the delivery, and natural delivery is supposed to have speedier recoveries after delivery. To help with my decision, I hired a doula, or labor support person to assist me.

At approximately 5:15 am on Friday, July 18, 2003, my water broke while I was laying in bed. This precursor to labor was actually a bit of a surprise, because that week, I seemed to be in a holding pattern as far as getting any signs that labor was imminent. So I made about 5 different phone calls while I lay in bed waiting for the amniotic fluid to drain enough that I could get out of bed without making a mess. The doctor on call said I should report to the triage section at the hospital (Swedish Medical Center on First Hill). After making arrangements for neighbors to watch Mia, Jim and I arrived at the hospital around 6:45 am. At around 8:00 am, we were released from triage, but told not to leave the hospital. We ended up sitting outside the hospital making more calls on our respective cell phones. Jim left at 8:30 am to go home and transition Mia from one set of neighbors to the other. Meanwhile, at my doula's recommendation, I took a walk around the area for about 1 ½ hours. Jim came back to the hospital around 10:30 am, and we went back upstairs to triage and waited there a bit until they had a birthing suite ready for me.

This whole time, I was getting contractions, but nothing too intense, and I had not dilated past 2 cm. So after being monitored for about an hour or so, I was free to go to the cafeteria and get some lunch, but to my dismay, was not allowed to eat anything really solid. After lunch, I was monitored again, and then Jim and I went for a walk around the block. I had been presented with the idea of being induced (which I did not want), and also having my contractions "augmented" with the smallest dose of Pitocin (labor-inducing drug). After the walk with Jim, I decided to go ahead and try the augmentation, on the assumption that it would be temporary, and once the Pitocin "jump-started" my labor, it would be taken off. Sure enough, after an hour, I got 3 contractions one right after another, and the nurse decided that the Pitocin was working a little too well. The contractions were still not too painful, though.

The doula arrived at the hospital around 4:30 pm; by that time, my contractions were such that I had to focus and breathe through them, but still not unbearable. Within half an hour, they were getting worse. I had been laboring in the Jacuzzi tub, but then got out, and the doula suggested that I labor leaning over the edge of the bed. Jim thinks this is what really got the ball rolling, because laboring in this position caused me to break out in a cold sweat, and the contractions were getting close to my tolerance level.

Around 6:00 pm, I had moved to the bed, and my doctor, who was planning to end her shift around this time, stopped in to check on me. I was 5 cm dilated, 99% effaced. She said she would check on a couple of other patients, and then head home. Around 6:30 pm, I was in a great deal of pain, and the nurse decided to check my status. It was almost impossible for me to move in any way. She checked me, then went to the intercom and asked for a second pair of hands, as I was 10 cm dilated, and ready to push. There was a great deal of confusion as they were trying to locate a doctor. It was right in the middle of the changing of shifts. I was only slightly aware of this problem; I was more focused on breathing through my contractions and getting ready to push. Apparently, the nurses managed to catch my doctor, and she came rushing back in to assist in my delivery. It was 6:32 pm.

I remember having to adjust my breathing pattern from getting through the contractions (slow, even breaths), to pushing (holding my breath and pushing to a count of ten, taking a deep breath, and pushing again). But once I got the hang of it, I could really feel the baby working its way very quickly through the birth canal. Before I knew it, the head had emerged, and within seconds, Anya was on my chest. The pushing took 11 minutes. It was 6:43 pm.

After the bad experience I had had with delivering Mia (vacuum extraction in the operating room because they came very close to performing an emergency C-section due to baby's repeated heart rate drops), the delivery of Anya could not have been more different. It happened just about exactly the way I had wanted, with no complications. Jim and I both think the doula was crucial in the way this delivery turned out. Jim is convinced that the labor position where gravity was used (standing and leaning on the edge of the bed) helped things move along so quickly. I was grateful that she was there to say all the things to reassure and help me relax so that Jim didn't get stressed out with trying to help me out in that fashion. He was there to hold my hand, and that was all I needed him to do.

So welcome baby Anya into the world, at 6:43 pm on Friday, July 18, 13 days prior to her due date. She weighed in at 6 pounds, 3.7 ounces, and measured 19 ½" long.

As for me, the recovery was remarkably quick. About 3 hours after the delivery, I was moved to a post-partem room, where Jim left to go home to Mia, and I spent the night with Anya by myself. I found I was able to move around pretty well and take care of the both of us without a great deal of difficulty. I left the hospital the following evening, for a couple of reasons. I felt fine, and was getting bored being by myself in the hospital, plus I missed my family. Also, both Anya and I kept on getting interrupted by nurses at seemingly the most inconvenient times (like just when we had settled down to sleep) to get our vitals checked, our blood drawn, etc. So Anya came home around 9:30 pm July 19 to join the rest of her family.