

Caitlin's Story

This is the story of my second homebirth, where I delivered Caitlin. My first birth, Meagan, was also at home until complications occurred. Meagan was posterior (face up) and caused me 26 hours of labor. About 22 of those hours were at home, but then her heart rate kept dropping during contractions, so we were transported to the Salem Hospital. The next few hours were a blur of pain, frustration, fear, and hope. The doctors pushed for a C-section, but I believed I could bring this baby into the world and when my faith faltered my husband and midwives helped me find my strength again. Then at 5:55 am, Meagan was born with the help of suctioning, and though I had lost some blood, I felt fine after resting part of the day, and I was home by that evening.

It was during Meagan's birth that my husband and I met Pamela. Then, she was finishing her apprenticeship under our midwife Abigail. Since Meagan's birth, Abigail had retired. But we loved and trusted Pamela so much the first time, we didn't hesitate asking her to be our midwife with my second pregnancy.

When I found out I was pregnant again, I was completely shocked. My husband and I weren't trying yet, and life was so hectic we weren't even sure of when we conceived! My best guess gave us a due date of January 26, 2004.

My second pregnancy was just as easy as the first. My check-up appointments were uneventful – normal urine, blood pressure, blood work, baby in good position, moving a lot, etc.

Well, as many of you know, January came and went. The bedroom and all my supplies had been set up for weeks and my whole family was getting anxious, but both me and baby were doing fine. As the weeks went on, I began having stronger braxton-hicks and some "real" contractions, but nothing with any regularity. Then, on the morning of February 20th, I woke up at 8:00 am with contractions 10 minutes apart.

I began making my phone calls to let everyone know things were finally happening and to get people to help watch Meagan during the birth. Of course she was fully prepared, our midwife recommended books, and videos we could watch together and we discussed the birth with Meagan in ways she could understand. Meagan came to all of my midwife appointments, and she was always very interested in the new baby.

When the contractions reached 5 minutes apart, Pamela and her apprentice Emily came over to get things ready. Nate's sister and both of our moms were here helping with Meagan, the house, and meals. Once my contractions were upon me, and I was giving birth Meagan was already the little helper, bringing me water and telling me I was a "strong mommy". All during this time, Pamela continued checking the baby's heart rate during contractions and everything seemed to be going great.

Then the pushing began. I tried several different positions and settled on using a birthing stool. It was now about 2:00pm and I started getting tired. Pamela checks my progress and the baby's posterior, and she tells me she can't tell but everything is fine and the baby just needs to get past the pubic bone. By this point I am very tired, screaming during the pushing and proclaiming how much it hurts. It goes through my mind how I ever made it through Meagan's 26 hours, feeling it was because I was younger and in better shape! All the while Pamela was right there, with encouraging words, telling me how wonderful I am doing and that I can do this. Nate was behind me, helping to support me on the stool and giving me a hand to squeeze. Meagan kept coming in and out of the bedroom bringing me water, giving

me smiles, and telling me she loved me. Oddly, she seemed totally unfazed by all the noise her mommy was making.

Shortly after that Meagan started getting cranky. She hadn't had a nap yet so Nate's mom took her for a drive, giving her time to relax. Then the real work began for me. Pamela had me move to a better position since I wasn't getting the baby down by sitting on the birthing stool. I got into a low squat with Nate behind me on the bed supporting my weight under my arms. With every contraction he used his legs to squeeze my hips to help open my pelvis. After what seemed like forever, but was actually only less than an hour I think, I pushed the baby past my pubic bone. What a relief to feel her head crowning – I knew at that point we HAD to be close. With only a handful more pushes and about 20 minutes, out she came, with a flood of blood. I could finally sit down. My legs were so tired from being in that squat. The first thing I did was look to see if it was a girl, and it was, hooray!!!

What happened next was a bit of a blur, but this is what I am told happened. I sat down on the floor and rested while Pamela cleaned Caitlin off. Then I got to hold her and she started to nurse immediately (what a relief). After sitting for a while they handed Caitlin to Nate, and then helped me stand to sit on the bed, but as soon as I stood, I blacked out. Nate said that I turned white and my eyes bulged out and I fell back on the bed. He was so scared, he thought he had lost me. I was only out for less than 30 seconds when I remember Nate and Pamela telling me to wake up. It was a very strange sensation, I felt like I had just woken up from a dream. Apparently I had lost about 5 cups of blood and had almost gone into shock. Pamela immediately put me on oxygen and gave me an IV. I was fine, but I needed to stay in bed for 2 days. I couldn't even get up to use the bathroom, not that I could have. I had to do everything lying down, I couldn't even sit up to eat or nurse Caitlin. Fortunately, she was an easy baby and nursed well with no problems. Pamela and Emily stayed with me until my blood pressure and pulse went back up and I emptied my bladder once. After that, Nate stayed up all night to check on me, making sure I emptied my bladder every couple of hours and kept me drinking my electrolytes and taking iron supplements. Over the next couple of days, Pamela continued to check on Caitlin and I, making sure we were doing well.

After 2 days of bed rest, I was allowed to get up to go to the bathroom or go into the living room to sit, but that was it for the next week and a half. I was very weak and became light-headed and winded pretty easily. Life was very frustrating for me at this point, and the baby blues turned into depression. It was very hard for me to cope with all the pressure of being sick, having a new baby, and helping Meagan through her new adjustments. Through much rest and support from Nate, Pamela, family, friends, the club, and a couple of counseling sessions I was able to put things into perspective and find a new normal. Now, 3 weeks later, I am feeling great and am ready to get back to life and create some new routines. Life is definitely never going to be the same, but it is going to be wonderful watching these two girls grow up together. It is the hardest thing I have ever done, or will probably ever do, but it will be and is the most rewarding.

- Camille