

Hi, my name is [REDACTED] 31 years old, a mother of a now one and a half year old. My partner and I went through fertility treatments to fall pregnant. My pregnancy was relatively easy with mild signs of preeclampsia towards the last couple of months. My baby was posterior and had marginal umbilical cord insertion.

My waters broke at home in week 37. I called the hospital, and they told me to stay at home until I was my contractions were regular and in active labour. I had attended all of my pregnancy and birthing classes and at this stage I had been attending twice weekly appointments with my private OBGYN. They said if my contractions hadn't regulated by midday the following day to call and go into hospital to start antibiotics and induction drip.

The following day at lunch time I called to advise my contractions hadn't regulated and I was told over the phoned last night by the midwife last night to come in for antibiotics and induction drip. They told me to come in.

When attending the hospital, they argued repeatedly about my waters, stating they hadn't broken, a test was done by a student midwife, similar to what a PH test strip looks like, and the result was negative. The senior midwife told me they hadn't broken, and I could go home. I pleaded for the student nurse to redo the test, I explained I know, although being a first-time mother, that my waters had broken I was still wearing extra absorbent pads and changing them regularly. She hesitated but did a second test which showed a faint positive for my waters breaking. The senior nurse was unhappy with the student for conducting a second test and even questioned the result. I advised my baby was posterior, no scans were done at any point on this day. I was advised by the doctor that they needed to start antibiotics to ensure myself and my baby didn't go into septic shock and cause other complications. I was told they needed to get me on an induction drip to regulate contractions as they were still irregular, the doctor advised this could not happen until they had enough staff.

By 8pm I was moved to a ward bed, shortly arriving I received my first dose of antibiotics. This was over 24hrs after my waters breaking and irregular contractions. I was repeatedly told this evening and overnight that there was not enough staff to start the induction. No one asked for my birth plan and a scan had still not been conducted.

When I woke the next morning, they said they were hoping to start the induction drip when morning staff come on. At 7am I was moved to a birthing suite and the induction drip was started. Again, no one asked for my birth plan and no scan was taken. When I arrived I stated I wanted to use the bath. Not once did anyone suggest or assist in facilitating trying the bath, my contractions started almost immediately after the drip.

Within 3 hours I requested an epidural and the anaesthetist completed this. Within the hour I requested he come back; it had not had full effect. I was told I was unlucky and that it was not possible to have the full effect, I can't recall the reason but sometimes epidurals don't have the full effect and I was aware of this from the birthing classes. Throughout the day I complained repeatedly that I could not feel any effect from the epidural. I was in a room with one student nurse who stayed on the computer on the opposite side of the room and rarely checked in with me. She gave me the gas and I felt she thought I was overreacting given I had an epidural. My partner saw that the catheter of the epidural wasn't connected, he called the student nurse over. I became upset, requested the nurse unit manager and anaesthetist. He attempted to redo the procedure for epidural, there was no more effect. He could see how much pain I was in and he started to do manual top ups with me and stayed close by, I also had the gas.

During my contractions and labour, a nurse come in wanting to break my membranes. I explained it had been two days since my waters broke and was certain they'd all naturally broken. I said I did not want an internal exam nor did I want her to 'scratch' the membranes. This nurse proceeded to do so without my consent, she used the glove and wire to 'break membranes' it was absolutely excruciating given my epidural was not working and I felt as though my pain was disregarded or disbelieved. I was in a hysterical state in pain and requested the anaesthetist come back. Who started doing manual top ups of a stronger drug than the epidural medication.

Fast forward to having had 10 hours of painful labour after the drip, not having successfully had efficient requested pain relief, it was time to push. I again reiterated that my baby was posterior and I had a marginal cord insertion.

No one did a scan, and no one could physically feel which position the baby was in. I pushed for 3 hours, for the last hour my baby was crowned, she was in the birthing canal, and I was pushing the way I had been for the first two. The midwives were telling me I was not doing it right. I was telling them I was doing it exactly the same way, that she wasn't progressing, that something was wrong, that she was stuck. They repeatedly dismissed me and I demanded the doctor come in to check and pleaded for help. I was absolutely exhausted. This was day 3 after waters breaking, 10 hours after the induction successfully started, 3 hours of pushing.

The doctor came in, the same doctor I had seen 10 hours earlier, still no scan to see babies' position. She said we needed to do an assisted delivery by cutting me to allow for more space for the baby to come out. I declined. She said we could do it in theatre and I declined. I said I could not push anymore and I wanted a c-section. She said this was not possible and that they needed to do the episiotomy. I sat up in bed and refused this procedure, I advised I was no longer going to push and I wanted the nurse unit manager and anaesthetist in the room immediately.

The anaesthetist advocated for me, it was the first employee who really listened, believed and cared, he said this woman needs to go to theatre and called his surgical team, within minutes the whole team was in my room, I was being wheeled up to theatre. My epidural was still not successful, this meant regardless of having whether I was to have an episiotomy or c-section, I was not numb, and they hadn't been successful in getting me numb. I was taken up to theatre with no pain relief with my baby well crowned and in the birth canal.

I refused to give consent for a surgical assisted procedure and episiotomy. I wanted a c-section and the OBGYN was still telling me it was unnecessary and telling me I may think it was the easy option, but it was not. The anaesthetist again advocated for me and the OBYN agreed to do the c-section. By this point I was in the operating room. This is when we had conversations whether to put me under a general anaesthesia or to attempt to give me the absolute maximum and strongest drugs to attempt to make me numb. We were successful and I was numb for the procedure.

By this time, I had had so many drugs my body was shaking uncontrollably I was terrified about having major surgery whilst not being able to stay still. Theatre staff were beyond incredible and put my favourite songs on to help distract me. They had to use a balloon to lift my baby out of the birth canal. Within minutes my daughter was out. She was healthy and responsive. My daughter was born with blisters and scabs on her head from the nurse conducting the scratch of the membranes earlier in the day. The OBYN told me in the theatre that there would have been no other way to deliver my baby other than the c-section.

I was unable to hold my baby due to the uncontrollable shaking, she was held for me close so I could touch her, I was unable to do my first breastfeed or hold in theatre. She was born at 8:15pm. A bit before midnight we were back into my room where a nurse assisted me in holding her and giving her my first breastfeed. Breastfeeding immediately afterbirth and skin to skin is so important for establishing breastfeeding.

I stayed a week in hospital, my daughter was very jaundice, but they didn't feel she was severe enough for treatment, although she lost over the allowed 10% of her weight. My milk came in on time, I know this as I was also expressing good amounts. She was feeding regularly but too tired to stay awake and to do so efficiently. I have done extensive research on breastfeeding and feel strongly about this and well educated. The hospital made me sign a form to consent formula top ups, knowing my wish was to exclusively breast feed. I know the detrimental affects starting formula top ups can have on a breastfeeding journey. This caused a tremendous amount of distress and heartache for me.

Australian Breast-Feeding Association and WHO support breastfeeding and if absolutely required expressed breast milk top ups to reach back to birth weight, but formula top ups aren't recommended due to the risk they pose on milk supply dropping for not having baby directly on breast.

Had my baby have had treatment for her jaundice she would have been able to stay awake enough to drink efficiently and directly from me. She would not have lost the amount of weight she did.

All of the above left me with post-natal anxiety, depression and guilt. It took months to try and put it out of my mind. I received help from the mother baby unit. I had the support of my partner, friends, family and a wonderful GP.

8 Months after the birth my daughter was admitted to the same hospital. During our five day admission I had flash backs of my labour and delivery. It still saddens me thinking about my experience, this would indicate some form of PTSD trigger.

I am entirely certain that had the hospital had sufficient staffing and recourses all of the above could have been avoided. It saddens me to think that women will keep going through this. I am unsure if I am ever able to go through this again after the trauma I experienced at the hospital.