

# CHOICE!

## How one of our members made the decision to plan a home birth

This month Michelle Bencich talks to us about her planned home birth and what actually eventuated!

### How did you come to the decision to plan a homebirth?

When I was pregnant with our first child five years ago in Nelson we visited the only maternity hospital. It was the oldest ward of the hospital, was dingy and horrible with old matronly midwives (I had a wonderful independent midwife). After the hospital visit our midwife offered the alternative of a homebirth which as it was the only alternative sounded like a much better choice. Although our first child was born in hospital due to an induction we were home four hours after his birth. So when I was pregnant with our second child it seemed natural to again explore the option of homebirth.

### What reactions to your plan did you encounter in your pregnancy?

We have no family in Christchurch so their opinion either positive or negative would not change anything. My husband liked the idea of going to a birthing unit so that I could stay after the birth for a couple of days and rest away from our active first child.

At 35 weeks we discovered our baby was breech and had to seek obstetric advice from Christchurch Women's Hospital. I had been previously admitted for high blood pressure. The first specialist we saw encouraged us to try a vaginal breech birth unless the baby was going to be over 91b then he would want to c-section. He refused to try and turn the baby so we sought a second opinion. The second specialist we saw basically told us it was unethical to be considering a vaginal breech birth. She was insistent that she wanted to c-section at 39 weeks and told us worst possible outcomes in a blatant effort to scare us into having a c-section. She was convinced the baby was too stuck to turn. Our midwife gave us all the information but was confident of a good result from a vaginal breech birth. I am still upset at the differing advice we received from the two specialists from the same hospital and the way they made me feel.



Maddison's first bath

### How did the actual birth go?

At 40.5 weeks Maddison turned to the specialist's complete amazement and an induction was scheduled. The induction was slow to get going. By midnight everyone was convinced I was just having contractions reacting from the induction, not really in labour. My husband went home. At one a.m. my midwife went home (she had been there being fantastic since 8am that morning). At two a.m. everything got going and at 2.10am Maddison was born with the help of the staff at Christchurch Women's. They were fantastic, made sure I was happy with all decisions over injections etc. Got a mirror to let me see and let me deliver my child. The cord broke for no apparent reason during delivery and was quickly clamped by the Christchurch Women's midwives. My midwife arrived in time for placenta delivery and my husband a few minutes after that.

### How do you feel about the decision to plan a homebirth now, having had your baby?

With the cord having broken during delivery I am pleased I was in the hospital. I do believe that things all happen for a reason, maybe that is why she was breech.

### Would you choose homebirth again?

We have chosen not to have any further children and are thankful for the beautiful two we have. I would probably choose a homebirth, or maybe a birthing unit just to have some bonding time with the new baby.

**What are the benefits and drawbacks of home birth, as you see it?**

Before or after the birth of Troy I would have said the main benefit was not being in a hospital, but the hospital midwives were so wonderful during Maddison's birth that I am no longer wary of a hospital birth. I



I guess the biggest benefit is that my husband and I are private people when it comes to special moments in our lives such as the births of our children. It is something we like to share together with as few other people around as possible. I always imagine it would be a wonderful thing to share with an older child seeing the birth of their sibling, for them to be an active part of it. The only drawback I see is that it could be harder to get the rest needed after a birth at home if you have older children who wish to jump into bed with you, visit etc without understanding why mum is in bed all day.

**Are there any other comments you would like to make about the home birth choice?**

I do firmly believe I was treated better at Christchurch Women's because I had a home birth midwife. They asked if I wanted the injection for me and baby after the birth. I believe I may not have been asked if I had a different midwife. They respected my choices without question and this is a great thing for both the hospital and the home birth midwives.

Maddison being held by her big brother, Troy