

## YOUR PREGNANCY

## I DID IT

## my way

Although caesarean deliveries account for almost a third of births in Australia, most women would rather not have one, according to a new study. The University of Queensland Centre for Mothers and Babies surveyed almost 700 women who gave birth in 2009, and almost eight in 10 women said they wanted a vaginal birth.

Unfortunately, births don't always go according to plan, and medical procedures are often necessary for the safety of both mothers and their babies. But by planning and considering options including natural methods like hypnotherapy and water birth, you may reduce the need for surgical intervention.

## HYPNO BUB

HypnoBirthing techniques aim to teach women to achieve a heightened state of relaxation, while being completely aware of the process of childbirth. According to certified HypnoBirthing practitioner Emma Sutherland, women who practise

these methods remove the fears that cause stress and pain, and instead use natural endorphins to birth their babies.

"If a woman feels fear and she gets tense, she feels pain and the cervix finds it harder to dilate," Emma explains. But if women are calm, the need for medical intervention is reduced. "And with HypnoBirthing, the caesarean rates are much lower," she says.

Emma's HypnoBirthing workshops require each client to bring a birth partner. "If a woman gets distracted, the husband (or partner) can utilise the skills we teach to dip her back into that state of relaxation," says Emma.

Emma says that HypnoBirthing techniques don't replace modern medicine, but they allow you to share your birthing goals with your midwife with confidence. And if intervention is not required, there are many proven benefits. "There's better bonding and less postnatal depression," she says.

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*"My fears diminished"*

Anne Loxley, 46, and her partner Justin, 40, welcomed their daughter Maxie, now a year old, into the world using HypnoBirthing techniques despite the need for significant intervention

"My fear levels totally diminished as I became immersed in the HypnoBirthing philosophy," Anne says. "I knew that I was going to be much more relaxed."

The birth, however, was anything but serene. Anne's waters broke six weeks early, and she was in hospital for a week before she was induced.

Anne says it wasn't pain-free - she had an epidural to alleviate the pain -

but HypnoBirthing techniques helped. "If I hadn't had the lessons, I would have been screaming through the pain," she says. "I knew also that I could do it."

Of the 11 other women giving birth that night, Anne was the only one who delivered a baby vaginally. She attributes this to HypnoBirthing.

Although she didn't have the completely natural experience she hoped for because Maxie was induced, Anne says HypnoBirthing was very empowering. "And it helps you remember childbirth is a natural thing - we were made for it," she says.

Want to take control of the birthing process and avoid medical intervention during your labour? Using alternative techniques from hypnotherapy and water birthing could help you do just that

## SPLISH SPLASH

Lois Wattis is a registered nurse and midwife based in Queensland who's worked at Nambour Selangor Private Hospital, where water birth is offered as part of the standard care package.

"After caring for women labouring in warm water, I couldn't imagine supporting a woman in labour in any other way," she says.

Lois admits that there has been opposition from obstetricians, most of whom are inexperienced with water birth. However she believes water birth is safe. "A baby is not stimulated to take her first breath until she is lifted out of the water and her face is exposed to air," she explains. "The umbilical cord is not cut, instead it continues to pulse with oxygenated blood, assisting baby's transition to breathing for herself."

Birthing in water also helps the mother, Lois says. "It's not invasive, and