Giving birth at home

This is a transcript of the Raising Children Network video available at http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/giving_birth_home_birth_video.html. In this video, parents share experiences of giving birth at home. They talk about preparation for homebirth, relationships with the midwives, and feelings about having their baby at home. One mum says being in her home surrounded by people who cared about her was important. Another suggests reading and doing some research to see if homebirth is right for you.

**Naomi** [Second birth – homebirth]: Having a home birth is something that you have to come to yourself and you have to really feel like it’s the right thing for you to do. Well I had had a really wonderful supported birth in the birth centre; I could kind of take that to the next step by having a home birth. The kind of midwifery care that you receive when you have a home birth is the real meaning of continuity of care. So: a one-on-one care provider; a midwife. In my case I chose to have two, I had the midwife who caught [my first child] Lewis, and I also had a midwife who works in private practice, an independent midwife, and you have these amazing hour-long ante-natal sessions with them, in your own home. They get to know your family, your other children, your husband.

**Naomi**: At the beginning of the pregnancy I saw a GP to have the routine ante-natal blood tests and I had a scan at 20 weeks. One of my midwives was in a collaborative arrangement with an obstetrician and part of that has to do with me being able to claim a lot of the birth through Medicare. So I knew that there was obstetric consultation, should it be required. But I had also booked in to my nearest hospital and just informed them that these were the approximate dates that I was due and that I was going to be birthing at home. They were aware, should I need to transfer in an emergency, or a non-emergency situation, that I wasn’t turning up out of the blue.

**Richard** [Naomi’s husband, second birth – homebirth]: Part of me I think was probably a bit more nervous or hesitant about home birth. We’d had Lewis two years before at the birth centre and that was a good experience, very simple, very easy, very quick. I think after that, Naomi was quite keen for a home birth. Just seemed like the right thing to do and the main thing was that she was – it was what she wanted to do and she was comfortable with it.

**Naomi**: My husband was really supportive of a home birth. He felt supported by our midwives. He knew that they were highly trained professionals and he was perfectly satisfied that they were able to deal with whatever situation might have eventuated. He was really informed about the birth and about home birth. We’ve done a lot of research, a lot of reading, a lot of – spoken to a really wide number of people.

**Brydie**: [third birth – homebirth] Edie was my third pregnancy and I wanted something different to what I’d had previously with my previous pregnancies and birth, which I’d had in the hospital setting. I wanted to be surrounded by my boys, my husband, and I
wanted people that cared about me and not just people walking in and out of a room
telling me how I should birth. That's what I wanted for my third pregnancy. We had a
birth pool and we moved the dining table and popped the birth pool there and she was
born in warm water with my husband present. She was born into my hands and my
husband’s hands and that was it. It was the most beautiful experience of my life.

**Naomi:** Giving birth at home was wonderful. It was in some ways such a normal
experience. Being able to be in my own space and a place where I feel comfortable, my
labour was relaxed. One of my midwives was here with me for most of the day and we
sat on the floor and sat on cautions and read magazines and chatted to my husband and
just had this lovely kind of indoor picnic while I breathed through contractions.

Then when things got intense, I got to get into the birth pool and be surrounded by my
husband, who I obviously completely trust, and I felt supported by my midwives. I guess
I was just so glad that they were here going through this experience with me. Then to
be able to get out of the birth pool straight onto my couch, they made a little nest for
me with duvets and pillows and to snuggle up and get nice and warm with this beautiful
new baby and have these few hours of just maybe gazing. Then I went upstairs and got
into my own bed and, I won’t say I slept on that, because I had a newborn baby and
that doesn’t really happen. But it was such a momentous experience and yet such a
lovely normal experience. It just felt like it was a part of life.

**Brydie:** Anyone that was thinking about homebirth I would suggest read up on what you
were thinking about. There’s so much online support whether it be blogs, websites, and
YouTube even has some amazing homebirth videos to look at and see if that’s the sort of
thing that you want to be involved in.

**Richard:** If you are having a water birth you do need to make sure you know how to get
that pool rigged up, how long it’s going to take to fill, make sure you have that in place.
You might need special hoses and attachments and some practicalities to think of if you
are going for a water birth. Be aware of what your partner wants. Make sure everything
is in place. You’re there ready to do the practical things that she can’t do and to offer
emotional support.

**Naomi:** Now, since the birth, I know a lot more homebirth women, but I didn’t – I only
knew one – one or two people that had ever had a homebirth before. So I felt I guess a
certain amount of pressure on me that – whether people around me that thought that I
was doing something really unsafe. I didn’t feel that I was, but I felt a certain – I had a
wondering.

**Brydie:** Don’t listen to people that are going to be negative about your experience
because their birthing experience, their birth history, is going to be completely different
to yours.

**Naomi:** Homebirth isn’t for everyone and I guess what I – the advice I give those, that I
think continuity of care is for everyone.

**Brydie:** Postnatally, my midwife came to visit me a couple of times. She would give me
a physical check, check to see if the baby was doing okay, mentally, physically how I
was doing.

**Naomi:** my midwives stayed for quite a few hours after the birth for medical reasons, to
make sure everything was fine with me and the baby, and then a midwife came first
thing the next morning then one of my midwives would come every day for the first week, have a look at Rowan feeding, talk to me about how I was feeling about that.

We’d have a chat about maybe how much sleep I’d had the night before, how he was going with sleeping. They did all the routine checks that I needed to do on him, check his heart, and that everything was developing properly, all of his reflexes were there. So every day for the first week they came.

Then, for the second week they came every second day. Then, beyond that they were on call for me 24 hours a day until eight weeks and I did call quite a few times, or they would call and check in with me and see how I was going.

I think the most important thing is feeling completely supported and nurtured by your care provider if you’re planning a hospital birth or homebirth.