



# Chiropractic Newsletter

## Well-Being

### Chiropractic to Change Birth as We Know It

There are few things harder for a childbirth educator to watch than a couple who tried desperately to achieve a natural birth have it slip through their fingers. How do well-prepared people sometimes end up with a birth very different than the one they planned?

There are many answers to that question, but one that I and many other childbirth educators have seen play out over and over again goes something like this: The mother works hard during her pregnancy, reading, exercising, eating well, learning to relax and understand the labor process. Ideally, her partner works right alongside her in this journey and they grow closer together as they anticipate the birth of their precious baby.

The long-anticipated labor finally begins! Mom starts laboring. But the contractions are harder than she anticipated. She feels them in her back and the contractions are irregular. Some last more than a minute, others for just a few seconds. After laboring for hours on their own, the



couple heads to their birth place. Mom is not very dilated despite hours and hours of what felt like hard labor. Mom is getting tired. The pain in her back keeps intensifying and nothing seems to help. Eventually the exhaustion and pain cause Mom and Dad to opt for pain relief via an epidural. The epidural is placed and Mom is confined to her bed. The labor goes on. The baby won't descend. Heart tones become non-reassuring. Mom is often diagnosed as either "failure to progress" or with cephalopelvic disproportion (CPD).

After hours of work and extreme fatigue, the baby is born via cesarean section. The

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parents are glad for a healthy baby but are confused and wondering why their birth didn't turn out the way they had planned.

What causes a labor to proceed in such a manner? The answer, often, is as simple as positioning. As anybody intimately acquainted with labor and birth knows, the baby's position can be just as important as the mother's. Yet sometimes all the education, preparation and exercise in the world will not ensure a properly positioned baby if the mother is not receiving good chiropractic care.

Chiropractic is often the missing link when it comes to natural birth preparation.

As a childbirth instructor, I taught for some time before I realized the importance of chiropractic as a key ingredient—an ingredient which is frequently left out of good childbirth classes. But finally it seems as though the wisdom of whole-body healthcare and the necessity of a balanced spine and pelvis in healthy birth is becoming

accepted for what it is: an integral part of birth preparation.

Chiropractic is valuable for every pregnant woman, but for women with unique situations such as malpositioned babies or previous cesarean section, chiropractic can mean the difference between a vaginal and a surgical birth. A true gift that some particularly dedicated chiropractors give their patients is the option of receiving a chiropractic adjustment while they are in labor.

As an educator, there are few things as triumphant as a woman having a healthy, natural birth when the odds are against her. We must give women the knowledge and care they need so they are well-armed for any birth that comes their way.

Those who care for birthing women want birth to be experienced as it is meant to be: full of joy and power. Chiropractic is an essential part of not just birth, but childbirth education, and it has the ability to change birth as we know it.

*By Sarah Clark, PW #41*

