AIMS For a better birth...

Vaginal Birth after Caesarean

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My first daughter was born 41/2 years ago by an elective caesarean due to high blood pressure. This experience left me feeling cheated and a failure. I had no experience of a contraction nor even had a chance to try for a normal labour and birth.

During my second pregnancy, I was determined to have as natural a birth as possible. I decided to book for a domino birth which meant that all my ante-natal care took place at home with a team of community midwives thereby avoiding stressful visits to the hospital. This went well and my blood pressure remained steady. I was fit and well and enjoyed getting to know the team of midwives. I was also attending really good preparation classes which greatly increased my confidence. However this w

as not to last. The midwives suddenly decided in my 33rd week that I was a 'high-risk case' because of the previous caesarean and that I was •suffering from hypertension'. They were unwilling to deliver my baby and argued that a hospital team of midwives - whom I had never met before - would be better equipped to deal with me. I was devastated and could not understand their attitude. My consultant argued that there may be a danger of the scar rupturing, but felt that despite my rising blood pressure at this stage, that the pregnancy was fine and that I would in all probability have a normal birth.

One week late, my blood pressure remaining fairly high but steady, my labour started. It progressed smoothly from the early hours of the morning and throughout the day. I stayed at home and breathed and squatted through every contraction. My blood pressure was fine and I felt on top of the world! I finally went into hospital already 8cms dilated. My delivery room was prepared with a mattress on the floor. My blood pressure, on being checked, was the lowest it had been throughout the pregnancy. I could not believe it.

The second stage was very hard work and had it not been for the help of both my friend and my husband, I would never have managed it. I did do it and gave birth naturally to a very healthy girl that evening. I was exhausted but very proud.

It certainly was worth being determined and insistent from the start.