

Luke Patrick D. Birth Story

Luke Patrick was born at 1:16 PM on Friday, May 20, 2011 at Shady Grove Hospital. Even though my labor was much longer than I expected, the natural birth experience I had with the help of MCA was absolutely wonderful and I couldn't have asked for anything more.

Here's my story...

I switched from my normal OB to MCA when I was 32 weeks pregnant. I had started to realize that having the intervention light/free birth that I wanted was going to be an uphill battle with the OB and wanted to find a practice that viewed childbirth as I did – as a normal process that should be allowed to proceed in a natural way as long as there are not complications that require specific interventions. I was so pleased upon switching to MCA to realize that the “special” things that I wanted for the birth which I was fighting for with the OB were either already standard for MCA or could be accommodated. This included avoiding pain medication, getting a Hep lock instead of an IV, having intermittent rather than continuous monitoring, moving around during labor, using the Jacuzzi tub for pain management, delaying cord clamping and cutting, and forgoing the routine Pitocin shot after delivery unless it was needed.

My due date was May 23 but I started having regular painful contractions about 1:30 AM on Thursday, May 19. They were consistently about 5 min apart, but only 30-45 seconds long, and accompanied by bloody show. I was in contact with MCA but we decided that I should labor at home and see how things progressed. My contractions continued until 9:30 AM but then spaced out for the rest of the day. When I tried going to bed around 9:30 PM, they really started growing in intensity and getting closer together. I woke up my husband, Sean, around 11:20 PM and called the midwife on call, Angel, to tell her we would meet her at the hospital.

When I was admitted to Shady Grove around 12:30 AM, I was 4 cm dilated with regular 4-5 min contractions. Angel met me in triage and immediately helped me to feel calm about facing my labor. We agreed that I would try to wait until I was 6-7 cm dilated to get in the Jacuzzi tub so it wouldn't risk slowing down my labor. I labored sitting in bed, walking the halls with Sean, rocking on the birthing ball, and doing lunges with one leg up on the bench in the room. I learned a number of pain management techniques in my Brio birth classes and found the most useful to be moaning “O” through the contractions over and over again (odd because I never thought I would be one of “those” women), rhythmically swaying my legs side to side, and having Sean strongly stroke down on my shoulders.

It took me until 6:30 AM to dilate to 6-7 cm and I was thrilled to get into the tub. The water felt great and really helped with the pain of the contractions and I was able to doze off for a while, which was very much needed given that I'd been awake except for a few brief naps for almost 30 hours. I got out of the tub at 9:30 AM and the contractions started coming one on top of another. Angel checked me to discover that I'd only progressed to 8 cm. My water had still not broken so Angel offered that as one option to try to get progress to pick up and I agreed. I was feeling really overwhelmed at this point and started crying to let off some of the emotion and frustration. Angel encouraged me to keep going and suggested I try the tub again. After a little while in the tub, the contractions got to be so intense that I could no longer cope by moaning and I started to lose control and scream at a couple of the contractions. Angel had me get out at 11:15 to check my progress and I was still only a loose 8 cms.

I decided to labor out of the tub so gravity could help me make that last bit of progress. When Angel checked me at 12:15 PM, I had progressed to 9 cm, but still not complete. We briefly discussed some pain options and the only one I could potentially have would be an epidural since it was too late for IV meds since they wouldn't be out of my system in time. I really didn't want to make it that far and get an epidural but was starting to despair being in such intense pain for any longer. Angel asked me if I thought I could labor another hour and I didn't, but we agreed that I would wait 30 min to see if I could dilate to 10 cm. That 30 min is a bit of a blur because of the pain, but I remember contractions coming on top of one another without any breaks and feeling like I was falling asleep almost instantly (like while sitting on the ball) when there were breaks. Angel came in right at 12:45 PM to check me and I had progressed some and was complete except for a lip on my cervix. My heart absolutely sank at the thought of needing to labor even a minute more. I think Angel sensed this and suggesting that I try a practice push at the next contractions to see if she could push on the lip of my cervix to make it go away. I did this and it worked! I was ready to push!

I tried pushing for a contraction in the standard on-the-back position with me holding my legs back and I HATED it. I then tried pushing while lying on my side, and while it was a bit better, it still didn't feel right. I asked to try squatting and Angel told me to go for it. I did a full squat on the floor near the end of the bed with Sean standing behind me for some support and me holding onto the leg of the bed in front of me. At this point the contractions felt like they were constant and I never got that natural urge to push, so I just kept pushing and could really feel the baby moving down (thank goodness I went drug free and could push in a position I wanted – it would have taken me forever if I had to stay on my back). Angel then suggested that I move to the hands and knees position on the bed and squat back in that since it was basically the same position except a bit flipped and much more conducive to catching the baby. I agreed and moved up onto the bed with everyone's help. I could really feel the baby's head low and started bearing down backwards pushing madly as soon as I was in position. I was worried about pushing too hard but Angel assured me to keep going and was really helpful in telling me when to push hard and when to back off a bit and let myself stretch – I think this is what helped me to avoid any perineal tearing. I felt the "ring of fire" as the baby's head descended, but it wasn't as bad as I thought and she had me push through it. I could feel the baby's head push through and then his shoulders on the next push, and then his body, which was really squirmy feeling. Angel immediately passed him through my legs onto the bed underneath me. It was the most amazing moment and I was shocked that he was out after only about 20 minutes of pushing.

Luke Patrick was born at 1:16 PM on Friday, May 20, 2011. He weighed 7 lbs, 9 oz and was 19 ¾ in long. Sean and I are absolutely in awe at our son and I feel so happy and empowered to have achieved the drug free birth that I wanted. I can't thank MCA enough, and Angel especially, for helping us to have this truly amazing experience!