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PREGNANCY

"After I gave birth to my daughter, I was put back together with 150 stitches."



JESS FITZPATRICK
JULY 13, 2019



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comments

I still remember the day clearly, I was almost 42 weeks pregnant and presented to the hospital. I was already so far overdue, they did not hesitate to induce me straight away and get labc



Bec Judd on
her post-birth
'fire fanny'

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located when it came to being
g to have.

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...and then I had the most excruciating pain and screaming for an epidural, even though I was incredibly naive of. I thought I had a "high pain tolerance" and wouldn't need it. Let's just say when telling me all the things that could go wrong when getting an epidural, one of the most extreme being the inability to ever walk again, I screamed, "I don't care if you have to cut all my limbs off, just give me that epidural now."

Bec Judd talks about post-birth 'fire fanny' on our Hello Bump podcast:

During this time, I was not assessed to see how my labour had progressed. Being a first-time mum, I assumed they must have thought I was still in the early stages of labour, maybe three to four centimetres dilated, if that. After my epidural kicked in and I was in a blissful, pain-free state, the midwife told me she was going to check how far dilated I was, then to have a sleep to give my body a rest before I pushed.

What she saw when she examined me was thick, black hair. My daughter's head was in full view and I was 10cm dilated. Having just received the epidural, the feeling in the room was pure panic. I needed to start pushing straight away, but couldn't feel a thing. I had no idea when my contractions were coming, so didn't know when to push. The midwife rushed around the corner and turned down the epidural, but we started pushing regardless.

I had a midwife down below, and a student midwife with her hands on my belly. She would feel when my stomach tightened with her hands, and told me when to push. I don't know if my lack of feeling, or my body progressing so quickly caused her to come very slowly, but it took a long and tiring two hours of pushing for her to enter the world.

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After about an hour, I was getting concerned about how long it was taking. No matter what I tried on my belly, my sides, standing up, squatting, every which way but she wouldn't budge. Eventually, despite my limited knowledge of pushing positions, I knew I didn't want to push in a way that this increased the risk of tearing.



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For intense pushing so hard I
whatever reason my body didn't
healthy and screaming. The

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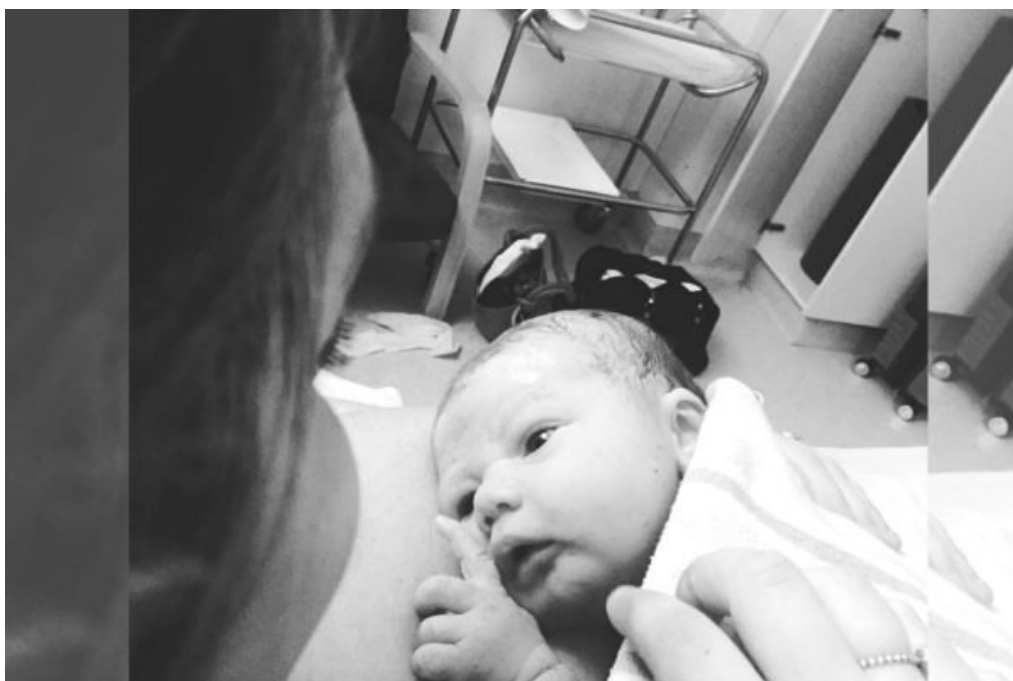
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midwife was thrilled she was brought into the world with no issues.

Me on the other hand, I was not well. To put it lightly, she ripped me a new one. A third degree tear, focused mainly on my anal area. I was put back together with over 150 stitches and let go from the hospital within 24 hours with my new baby and unfamiliar body.

The first few weeks were hell, absolute hell. My baby was perfect, she was sleeping beautifully and I was breastfeeding like a dream. I was attended to at home by health nurses who praised me on doing a good job as a mother, told me the pain I was experiencing was normal and that I would be okay in a few weeks. But by two weeks post partum, emotionally and physically, I was lost. I felt extremely isolated and alone. I was not able to leave the house as I couldn't walk without assistance, and even if I could walk, going to the toilet was worse than child birth. Worse than the pain of my contractions. My bowel movements were soft, yet I would still scream in pain every time I needed the toilet. As soon as I started to feel a bowel movement coming, I would just break down and cry. I wish I could put the pain into words, but I can't. I also wish I could tell you this went away after six weeks, which is the normal "healing" time after child birth. This went on for six months. Excruciating pain for six months.



"I was not well. To put it lightly, she ripped me a new one." Image: Supplied.

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I presented to my six week GP appointment a fragile mess. The doctors weren't overly concerned about the "normal" healing for the tear I had experienced. I could not fathom what I was feeling or the shape or form "normal". I could understand that I had just given birth and I would be in a different shape. I saw how people I knew who gave birth at the same time as me were totally fine. Even the ones who were not normal. They couldn't understand why I wasn't okay. They would often say "but you didn't walk." I wouldn't say much, but in my head would think, "My vagina had a C-section though."



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nd were able to share the
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ne, I am not surrounded by a

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whole lot of other mothers, even though I was really excited to meet new people and form those bonds. Unfortunately, I was unable to leave the house.

It wasn't until I saw a beautiful physio that everything changed. Someone finally felt my pain. After some invasive examining of my back passage - which I had become used to - she came to the conclusion I was over stitched, and I had then over-healed. She explained it to me by using an elastic band. She stretched it until it broke, but when tying it back together, she brought it in just a little bit further than it used to be. She then put her finger inside the elastic band to show I also had a thick layer of scar tissue all the way down my anus. To put it simply, the passage was now a lot tighter than before so every time I went to the toilet, I was being ripped open each time, no matter how soft I tried to make my bowel movements.

I was referred to a colorectal surgeon who wanted to perform surgery to rectify the damage. I was thrilled, overjoyed that I was going to have my life back. That was until I was told I would be put on a waiting list with a six months minimum wait. I could have paid to have the surgery as a private patient, but as a 22-year-old I just didn't have this kind of money lying around.

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Months went by, and by six to seven months, I was finally starting to feel like myself again. Without oversharing too much, after months and months of agony and torture every time I passed a bowel movement, my body did the work on its own and managed to stretch itself back out to a bearable point. By this stage, I just wanted to move on with life and not talk, nor think, about this traumatic time ever again. In a way I feel as though I suppressed it all to cope with the emotions I felt.



"I was not well. To put it lightly, she ripped me a new one." Image: Supplied.

Fast forward to now, two years later: I am currently 28 weeks pregnant with baby number two. I don't talk about the experience of my first childbirth a lot, nor do I think about it. It has come up in the last few months though, and I struggle with feeling a mixture of anger, sadness and mourning a birth I never received. I never had that happiness I was supposed to feel in those newborn days. The pressure of this baby on my pelvic region has also caused me to swell, bringing back some of the symptoms I experienced two years ago. While not as severe, I am still terrified every time I need to do a bowel movement in fear it's going to cause the same pain.

The way I have been treated during this pregnancy is also remarkably different. I often say rather than "proactive". I've been offered services, choices, support, and information I was my first pregnant - just because of what I went through with my first birth. While I am so wonder if only they were as proactive with my first birth, I wouldn't have had to gone thr sad and angry.



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While I still have PTSD and feel lost sometimes with the thought of what I went through, I feel the worst when I think about other mothers who may have gone in as naive as I was, thinking everything was going to be okay. I urge mothers to always know they have a choice and that it's okay to speak up if you feel you aren't feeling heard. I also want to stress the importance of making sure YOU are okay. Although the old saying goes, "but your baby is healthy, so that is all that matters" - and I cannot stress how lucky I feel each and every day to have a beautiful, amazing and happy daughter who is the light of my life - I also matter. A mother's well-being should always be put on the same level as the baby. We matter as well and we deserve to have a choice, always.

I feel as though the stigma around "natural birth" needs to be removed and the [Australasian Birth Trauma Association](#) is doing that, not just this week for Birth Trauma Awareness Week, but every day. My natural birth has left me with life long injuries now that would not have occurred if my scream for a C-section was heard. It's an extremely touchy topic, so I just want mums to know that natural birth is not always better.

This week, July 7 - 14th, is Birth Trauma Awareness Week.

Do you have a traumatic birth story you'd like to share? Tell us in a comment below.

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Tags: babies , baby-2 , birth , birth-trauma , motherhood , pregnancy

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