



# The Spinal Column

## Why Choose a Home Birth?

By Dr. Rupi Mitha, B.Sc., N.D.



I had the privilege of having 2 home births. Both were planned with my husband (a chiropractor), 2 midwives and my doula (labour support) in attendance. My daughter's labour had me in our tub for most of the active labour. This experience was completely grounding for me. The water enabled me to handle the pain, my music made me comfortable, the lights were dimmed down and knowing that I was not pressured allowed me to enjoy her birth. My son's birth (13 months later), very different. In fact, even if I hadn't planned a home birth it would have been as his birth was 1 ½ hours. The great thing about his labour was that I still felt in control. I was in my own element, I knew where I could be comfortable despite the very intense sudden contractions. I really do believe that in any other place, this labour could have been disastrous. Many women have horror stories of their births while I feel I am one of the luckiest women in the world to be able to say that labour was an enjoyable experiential process for me.

“The danger of home as a place of birth does not lie in its threat to the healthy survival of mothers and babies, but in its threat to the healthy survival of obstetricians and obstetric

### Who would give birth at Home?

More and more families are now choosing to give birth in the comfort of their own homes. For much of western society the notion of not going to the hospital seems archaic and savage. But for those who choose to avoid the medical route of birthing, they would not want it any other way.

Since the beginning of our human existence birthing has been accepted as a natural process of our life cycle. It was never looked upon as an illness or an ailment, which required medical attention. It was only with the dawn of industrialization that we began hospitalizing our pregnant mothers. This is a very recent phenomenon. One, which you will see, does not necessarily benefit both the mother and the child.

This article is strictly intended to provide information that is not commonly known. Only you can assess your comfort level when it comes to giving birth.

### When Did Birthing Become a Sickness?

It wasn't until the last century that women began going to hospitals to give birth. In most western cultures, midwives were available to visit homes and then attend the births. With the advent of modernization and the introduction of the germ theory, this was now not encouraged. Compounding this was the gender issue where the medical establishment (mostly an old boys club) wanted to then take over the roles of these traditional women by labeling them as primitive and unsafe. This of course swayed many to leave the old ways. Now women were to be poked and prodded throughout their entire pregnancies. They were to be told to expect nothing but pain and negativity in giving birth to their child. They were told that they needed to lie on their backs to give birth and any other position was not acceptable. Using medication became the norm, not feeling labour was expected. We were and are told that home births are unsafe when the statistics actually show otherwise.

Hospital infant death rates are 9/1000, while home births rate at 3-4/1000. You have a 3x more likely chance of having a C-section in the hospital. Some studies also indicate that fetal distress can be upto 6x higher in the hospital setting. There is a higher incidence of neonatal infections and of contracting infections from the hospital. One study even indicated that a women is 9x more likely to have an episotomy or massive tearing in the hospital.

On the other hand, midwives knew the signs and symptoms of a normal delivery and warnings of an impending issue. But in this modern society, this traditional system was no

longer encouraged. Being pregnant meant going to a hospital when there was nothing wrong with you. Women just had this illness called pregnancy.

### The Safety of Home Births

The National Perinatal Epidemiology Unit concluded in 1994 that "no evidence exists to support the claim that a hospital is the safest place for women to have normal births." The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that "it has never been scientifically proven that the hospital is a safer place than home for a woman who has had an uncomplicated pregnancy to have her baby". Studies of planned home births in developed countries with women who have had uncomplicated pregnancies have shown sickness and death rates for mother and baby equal to or better than hospital birth statistics for women with uncomplicated pregnancies."

Study after study have shown a decreased incidence of any medical intervention (induction, pain medication, c-sections), decreased chance of tearing and/or episiotomies and a significant reduction in the incidence of post-partum depression.

For true emergencies that require transport to the hospital, women laboring at home 20 minutes from the hospital have the same access to emergency surgery as women laboring at that same hospital. Many hospitals cannot prepare for an emergency surgical delivery in less than 20 minutes

One can now see how that with the proper information, a home birth is not so barbaric after all, it is just a part of the cycle of life.

### About the Author:



Rupri Mitha N.D., Owner and Naturopathic Doctor of the Brampton Naturopathic Clinic, offers residents of Brampton the choice of reliable, educated holistic health care.

Having completed her education at The Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine (the only accredited Naturopathic Institution in Canada) and subsequently receiving her license, she offers her patients a variety of healing modalities. Methods of treatment include Nutrition, Diet and Lifestyle Counselling, Herbal Medicine, Homeopathy, Acupuncture and Hydrotherapy.

Naturopathic Medicine is covered by most extended health benefit programs.

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