

To Posh to Push

There has always been a feeling in the media that pregnant celebrities often opt for elective caesarean sections rather than a natural delivery to avoid the pain of childbirth. The likes of Victoria Beckham and more recently Jordan have been dubbed "Too posh to push", choosing to book themselves into a private clinic for a section and a tummy tuck whilst they are there. This has in turn been blamed for the rising numbers of c-sections being carried out in the UK. In the 90's, approx 20% of births or 1 in 5 were carried out by caesarean section, where as statistics recently have shown that this has increased to 25%; 1 in 4.

Immediately, the media pounces on this and says how women today are being brain washed by society into believing that childbirth must be so horrific, compared to a "simple caesarean" which in turn can be performed at your convenience and not interrupt your schedule too much. After a few weeks, you will be back to your pre-pregnancy size as the surgeon will simply take away that excess baby weight leaving you free to tone up using your personal trainer of course.

But, in reality, is a caesarean section really the easy option and are we being brainwashed by these glamorous stars? Personally, I think not.

Victoria Beckham was slated by the press for having a c-section with Brooklyn. However, it was her doctor who decided that Brooklyn and Romeo had to be born by caesarean. For Brooklyn, she had seen her doctor for a check up and he had informed her that the baby needed to be delivered that night, leaving a frantic father to race down the motorway to be with his wife! Jordan, she had Harvey naturally and had expected to have Junior the same way. However, a scan showed that the baby could not be delivered safely naturally due to an unusual membrane blocking the cervix and so she was advised to have a caesarean. I am sure that there are women out there who chose to have an elective caesarean as they do not want to go through childbirth, and that is their prerogative, but why does society make us feel that we have in some way failed?

In my own experience, I was going to have a natural delivery, using aromatherapy and as little pain relief as I could manage. I had followed a homeopathic route during pregnancy and in my own little hippy world, I was going to be the true earth mother to the end. Ella however had different ideas and decided that it would be better to disengage her head, which had been fully engaged, and try and escape through my left hip rather than the natural exit. As I had been induced, and I was in my 2nd labour (they had stopped me the night before as I had not been dilating), when the consultant realised what was happening, there was no option but to have an emergency section. My baby was stuck, and in a different place in time or even today in another part of the world, one or both of us might not have made it.

The fact is that medicine today has come on leaps and bounds and doctors are able to spot problems today that would have been undetectable years ago. For first time mothers, approx 40% of births are by caesarean section. That's 1 in 3! My consultant told me that 20 years ago, I would have been left in labour and only when I had haemorrhaged or the baby's heart beat was undetectable would they have found that there was a problem by which time, at least one of us would have been in serious trouble. I found out recently that my Mum had been born by caesarean. Bearing in mind she has just celebrated her 60th birthday, that was a rare event in her day. My Grandmother had gone into labour naturally, but had haemorrhaged and passed out, so the doctor operated. My Grandma nearly died during the procedure, as did my Mum but thankfully, a quick thinking doctor saved them both.

A poll I did recently at a large online pregnancy community site called Madmums, showed that of those that had caesareans, not one of them had an elective section that was not on the advice of a doctor. The caesarean rate on Madmums is consistent with the national average, but it just goes to show that women do not seem to be begging their doctors for sections for the sake of avoiding the throws of labour. I find it interesting too that some women who have had sections then go on to have natural deliveries, or at least would like to go on and have a natural delivery.

Personally, after Ella was born I did feel that I had failed in some way for having a section. My body is supposed to be designed to have children, so why couldn't I have had her the natural way? At my antenatal class reunion when Ella was 2 weeks old, out of the 12 mothers in the room, I was the only one who had had a section, and I felt that I had to justify myself. I have since found out that another 8 babies from our class were born by caesarean, but the mothers were either still in hospital or just home and so not able to come to the re-union.

It saddens me that instead of celebrating medical achievement and the fact that more babies are being delivered safely into the world, the media jump on the statistics and paint a distorted picture of reality. The medical profession are able to spot many more problems with an unborn child than they ever could in the past and if a caesarean section is the safest way to give that child the best start in life or to protect the mother, then why not?

About the Author

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