

So How'd It Go?

Overall, so much better than my fears were telling me it would go. I had my second cesarean section on Friday, October 7. Boy was I nervous beforehand! I figured I would write out the details, just in case we decide to do this again I can look back at it and know what to expect. So I warn you, if you're squeamish about medical procedures or just plain not interested, then skip the post. But if I can make just one person feel more at ease about their impending cesarean, even if it's future me, then it's worth writing this all out and sharing the details.

The day of my scheduled cesarean, the hospital told me to arrive at 5:30 AM. Hubby and I set the alarm for 4:30 and got there a little early so we could visit the hospital chapel and pray together. Thankfully, Grandma had arrived in town the night before and had our 4 kids at her hotel. The first nurse we asked did not know where the chapel was in the hospital, which I found strange, but then again, our local hospital is undergoing major expansion and renovation, so I guess that's the excuse I'll let them have for the fact that their chapel (when we finally found someone who knew where it was) was just an empty room. No matter because God listens where ever you are, so we prayed together and went back to the maternity ward where they began to prep me for my surgery. They put an IV in, which didn't go very well. Seems I have great veins in my arms for drawing blood (the blood techs always ooh and ahh over me and my veins, which makes them weird in my book), but in my hands, not so much. Getting IVs is always very painful for me, and it bruises up my whole hand. This day was no exception. It hurt a lot, and they had to give me 2 holes before they got it right. Then the nurse comes and tells me that because of the combination of it being my 5th baby and the fact that I had to have a blood transfusion last time that they were going to have to give me a back-up port in my other

hand just in case. So they start doing that, and that one hurts even more. Next thing I know, I have a golf ball sized lump in my hand – “The vein blew” the nurse told me. I don’t ever want to hear anyone tell me that something carrying blood throughout my body “blew”, and I still haven’t googled that one to see what it is because it sounds so nasty. And at this point, I’m near tears thinking that if things are going wrong already, what will happen when they cut me open? But they finally got my second IV port in, and then after the insertion of the catheter (not a big deal and I will spare the details), I was ready to be wheeled off to the surgery room in a wheelchair.

Luckily I had taken the c-section class at the hospital, so the cold sterility of the operating room did not alarm me, and I also knew that my Hubby had to wait outside until certain preparations were made. On our way into the operating room, I saw the backup doctor, and he was talking to himself in the hallway in kind of a strange way. He is known for being a bit different, so it didn’t really worry me, especially since I knew my regular doctor would be there also. Besides, Dr. Strange delivered my 3rd child, and she was the easiest delivery I had. I will spare details for what happened next; it’s a bit personal – if you really need to know how they prep a patient for a c-section then take a class at your local hospital. Then the anesthesiologist came in, and my heart sank when I realized it was the same lady who gave me my epidural during the birth of baby #4 – the epidural that never worked. She gave me my spinal, and it pinched a little, but much less than an epidural, not really a big deal at all. My legs started to get tingly, and I was really starting to panic big time. I kept asking the anesthesiologist if everything I was feeling was normal, and she was so nice and reassuring. They had a blood pressure cuff on my arm which kept going off every few minutes, and they also gave me oxygen in my nose – I felt very well cared for. They let Hubby in, and he and the anesthesiologist (so tired of typing that word, think I’ll

just call her Dr. Drug from now on) sat by my head the whole time. Dr. Drug said that they would test me to make sure that I was numb before they did anything, but guess what – they didn't. I brought this up to someone after it was over, and they had a good point – they probably tested my numbness but didn't even tell me about it. Since it was working, I didn't feel the test, so they proceeded. Duh. It's just that I was so nervous about the numbing not working after what happened with my epidural; you can't blame me for being concerned.

The next thing I remember is the tugging and pulling, which is also something for which the c-section class prepared me. But it was actually much less unpleasant than I had panicked it would be. It's just that it seemed to take forever. They said it would take about 1-2 minutes and according to Hubby, it took 4 minutes. If you ask me, I would say it took 15 minutes. The whole time I could hear the doctors talking and I kept asking Hubby what they were saying because I was panicking about the health of the baby and the fact that I was lying there sliced open on the table. He said they were just discussing their techniques. My Hubby kept looking down there, past the curtain, and I kept wondering how he could do that – if it were him lying on a table sliced open, I don't know that I could look. But then again, I don't think it was like surgery looks on tv – I was picturing a completely open body cavity, but that's a different kind of surgery. I guess that's why there was all that tugging and pulling. So anyway, finally Hubby says that the baby is out, but I don't hear crying, so I begin to panic even more (notice a trend here? I am a worrywart, in case you haven't noticed). But both people seated at my head tell me everything is fine, and then I hear the baby (Luke James) cry. I feel so relieved, and I can't believe it's over. Except it's not. They clean up the baby, and they hold him up in front of my face for about a millisecond, and then they take him out of the room along with my husband and probably about half the staff that was on hand. At some point, I don't remember when, but I'm pretty

sure it was after the baby was born, Dr. Drug held up a little vial and says, "I'm going to give you this." She puts it in my IV, and I find out later that it was Duramorph, a form of morphine. I'm wondering now if this is something they give all their c-section patients (those who are not opposed to medications), or if I got the "panicking patient" special. At any rate, after the morphine, my memory gets fuzzy, but I do remember lying there getting sewed up (still not feeling a thing below my chest). My complaint was that it seemed to take FOREVER because I had nothing to do but lie there, and all I could think about was seeing my baby. I even got envious of my poor husband, because here I had just gone through this surgery and now HE was getting to spend all this time with the baby and I hadn't even barely gotten a look at him. They should really think about putting a tv in there or something... or would that distract the doctors? Best not to think about it, I guess. I had to keep talking myself out of looking at the ceiling because it was reflective, and I could see a little of me and a lot of red there – they ought to fix that too; I would bet that no one wants to see themselves getting surgery. But finally they were finished, and a few of the staff people worked together to lift my helpless body onto the gurney for the transport back to my room.

When I got there, there was Hubby with the baby, all excited to see me, and then I finally got to hold our new son. And he was (is) so incredibly beautiful. The rest of the day was wonderful. Slowly my legs began to work again, and I could not believe it that I had absolutely no pain! It did not resonate with me that I was on drugs. I did feel kind of loopy, but I didn't really think much of it and enjoyed the euphoria of having a new healthy baby and the relief that the worst part was over. Weather-wise it ended up being a terrible weekend to be stuck in the hospital – it was 80 degrees out and sunny, and the grandmas took my kids to the zoo on Saturday, so I had to miss that, but at least they got to go. When I was released from the hospital on Monday, it

was still very nice out for a few days, but I didn't feel up to going outside and by the time I did, Northern Ohio fall weather was in full swing and I've been cold ever since. Oh well, such is life, and my Hubby had perfect advice when I was bummed about missing the beautiful fall colors (it was amazing how different our neighborhood looked with all the leaves on the ground after just 3 days!). He said, "There will be plenty more color-changing seasons, but there are only so many baby seasons." What a wise, wonderful man!

Back to my recovery in the hospital, it went fairly smoothly, although I did have a lot of pain starting Saturday once the morphine wore off. The baby was up all night on Friday, but I didn't mind at all because I just wanted to be with him. I haven't watched tv in years, but over the weekend, I watched countless episodes of 3's Company, Roseanne (forgot about the one where Becky gets into the liquor cabinet, haha!), and Everybody Loves Raymond – you know, shows from when tv was actually good. I learned about the Prohibition era from PBS, and I also learned that there are conspiracy theorists who believe that there really isn't gold in Fort Knox – hmm, that's something to think about I guess. Luke slept a full 5 hours on Saturday night from 1:30-6:30, and so did I since no one came for my blood until 6:30. Last time I was in the hospital, I seem to remember them coming for blood every hour on the hour which made it really hard to sleep, but then again I had a lot of complications last time including the need for an emergency cesarean and a blood transfusion. Sunday night, little Luke decided he wasn't going to sleep again, and I woke up from my 45 minute nap that night feeling terrible – achy and lots of other pain, and chills because of a fever I was running. Not only that, but there was a mean nurse who informed me in a not-so-nice way that I was over my limit of acetaminophen, which meant I was not allowed any pain medicine. That really ticked me off; partly because of the way she said it, and partly because no one had given me any indication that this was a problem. Had they warned me that I

was getting near the limit, I would have declined some of the meds offered to me to avoid this. Actually, all of the other nurses had been telling me that I should stay ahead of the pain. They specifically said not to wait until the pain was really bad to take the meds otherwise they wouldn't work. The staff must have known I was upset because at 11pm Sunday night, my doctor called my bedside phone personally and reassured me. And my doctor is the one I credit with my smooth delivery and quick recovery – she has been 1000% better than my previous doctors in every way throughout this process, and for that, I am so thankful.

Since I've been home, I've been resting (probably not as much as I should have, but I have 5 kids now, who can rest with 5 kids in the house??). Hubby has been *amazing* at taking care of me AND things around the house, but he also started a new job 2 days after the baby was born, which leaves him with 2 jobs, taking care of the 4 kids and me AND waking with the new baby at night as he likes to do. My mother did a ton of laundry while she was here, and I'm just now starting to do laundry again a week and a half later, so that helped a lot too. People from church have been wonderful about sending meals for our family, and that has been incredible. Not only that, but we also have frozen meals that people sent and that my husband's mother made while she was visiting for when our meal delivery runs out. It's been crazy, but we are managing, and a week and half later, I've been out and about and back in the real world. I still have pain, but nothing extreme, and my 600mg ibuprofen works pretty well for that. There are 2 complications I had that I was not expecting; one is worthy of a blog post all its own and I'll get to it next time. The other is the return of my backaches. I've had a sore back since high school; I worked fast food and had to pop a Doan's before every shift to make it through. There are various things that I think caused it, but what does that matter now. The strange thing is that during my pregnancy, my backaches disappeared. Most women find new backaches during pregnancy,

and mine disappeared. I didn't think much of it until I get home from the hospital and experience my back pain again. This is discouraging because I know the incision pain will go away with time, but the backaches seem to be getting worse, and I have no guarantee that my back will ever feel better. I guess it's something to talk to my wonder doc about in my 6-week follow-up. I already had my 1 week follow-up with the doctor, and she said my incision looks really great and my body is healing well – for that I am thankful.

Baby's healthy, 4 big sisters and brother are healthy, I'm getting healthy, and Hubby is healthy (even if he needs much more sleep – praying for that to come soon) – what more can we ask for! Life is good; God is great!

And oh yeah... everywhere little Luke goes, he has a constant crowd of admirers. If it wasn't so sweet, it would be annoying because hey, when is it MY turn to hold the baby?!?

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Flashback!

In the last few days, my recovery from tthe emergency c-section has not been going well. I awoke from a nap Thursday

night feeling awful, but luckily my medication kicked in, and I was able to enjoy the midnight showing of The Dark Knight – more on that later. Friday we met Grandma in South Bend Indiana which is halfway between Chicago where she lives and Ohio where we live to transfer my kids for a week's vacation with Grandma. I felt awful all day, and I started shivering in the restaurant. I knew there was something really wrong when I went outside into the 90° oven and actually *enjoyed* it – uh oh.

When I got back to Ohio, I had an appointment with my doctor for her to take out my staples (yes, they had to actually use *staples* to put me back together, yuck) and that actually went well. Hardly hurt at all, just a little pinch, and it didn't take long. I brought up my symptoms to my doctor and she said everything was normal, and I believed her because when I had my other babies, I would heal up right away, so I figured these were all just side effects from the cesarean. But I took another nap when I got home and when I woke up, I felt like I was dying – that's really the only way to describe it. We took my temperature and it was 102.7°, so of course I had chills, the sweats, headache, and pain. A quick look on the internet gave us the diagnosis: mastitis – a common infection often suffered by breast-feeding mothers. We called the doctor and they wouldn't prescribe any antibiotics over the phone, so we headed to the hospital for the 2nd time in a week...

The admissions people panicked when they saw us coming in with the baby, but we quickly explained it wasn't him, thank goodness. Anyway, after a quick look, the ER doctor confirmed our internet diagnosis and sent us home with a prescription. But since all the pharmacies were closed in our town, they gave me some medicine right then and there. "Name and birthdate", they always ask at the hospital before they give you your meds, and I was like, FLASHBACK! I thought I was done with this for awhile! But for spending a Friday night in

the ER, it wasn't so bad; we were actually in and out in an hour. If this had happened in suburban Chicago where I used to live, it would have taken 3-4 hours to wait our turn in the ER, and they would have wheeled a few body bags past us while we were waiting. So today, I feel much better comparatively, and since the girls are with grandma, I slept until 11:30, so I'm sure that also helped. The antibiotics seem to be working already, and it was nice to wake up and not feel like I was dying, something that hasn't happened for a few days. I also feel better that now I think my recovery from everything is headed in the right direction, whereas when I felt crappy and didn't know why, it was discouraging because I was thinking, will I ever feel better?

My husband is peeved at my OB-GYN for not checking me more thoroughly during my visit with her yesterday. I agree; I did mention my symptoms and she was too dismissive, but being a man (especially one who won't listen to doctor's orders – if the doctor tells him to do something or recommends some sort of exam or test and he doesn't want to do it, he just won't) I don't think he understands how important to me it is to have a woman OB-GYN, and she is the only one in town. Besides, I do like her, she is gentle and she has been through 3 c-sections herself, so she knew exactly what to tell me about what to expect. If we do have any more children, there will be some debate about which doctor we will use. Well, anyway... off to Walmart to get my *third* prescription this week!