



Chiropractic Newsletter

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The Growing Role of Chiropractic in Childbirth Education

There are few things harder for a childbirth educator to watch than a couple who tried desperately to achieve a natural birth have it slip through their fingers. How do well-prepared people sometimes end up with a birth very different than the one they planned?

There are many answers to that question, but one that I and many other childbirth educators have seen play out over and over again goes something like this: The mother works hard during her pregnancy, reading, exercising, eating well, learning to relax and understand the labor process. Ideally, her partner works right alongside her in this journey and they grow closer together as they anticipate the birth of their precious baby.

The long-anticipated labor finally begins! Mom starts laboring. But the contractions are harder than she anticipated. She feels them in her back and the contractions are irregular. Some last more than a minute, others for just a few seconds.

After laboring for hours on their own, the couple heads to their birth place. Mom is not very dilated despite hours and hours of what felt like hard labor. Mom is getting tired. The pain in her back keeps intensifying and nothing seems to help. Eventually the exhaustion and pain cause Mom and Dad to opt for pain relief via an epidural. The epidural is placed and Mom is confined to her bed. The labor goes on. The baby won't descend. Heart tones become non-reassuring. Mom is often diagnosed as either failure to progress or with cephalopelvic disproportion (CPD).

After hours of work and extreme fatigue, the baby is born via cesarean section.

The parents are glad for a healthy baby but are confused and wondering why their birth didn't turn out the way they had planned.



What causes a labor to proceed in such a manner? The answer, often, is as simple as positioning. As anybody intimately acquainted with labor and birth knows, the baby's position can be just as important as the mother's. Yet sometimes all the education, preparation and exercise in the world will not ensure a properly positioned baby if the mother is not receiving good chiropractic care.

Chiropractic is often the missing link when it comes to natural birth preparation.

As a childbirth instructor, I taught for some time before I realized the importance of chiropractic as a key ingredient—an ingredient which is frequently left out of good childbirth classes. But finally it seems as though the wisdom of whole-body healthcare and the necessity of a balanced spine and pelvis in healthy birth is becoming accepted for what it is: an integral part of birth preparation.

Chiropractic and Childbirth Education

It seems obvious that a skilled chiropractor can have a phenomenal impact on pregnancy, labor and birth. Despite this fact, few childbirth educators are talking about chiropractic as a way to ensure a better birth. This, however, is starting to change. I asked Donna Ryan, founder and president of Birth Boot Camp, why she included chiropractic in every 10-week series she and her instructors teach. Her answer is powerful.

“I have seen, literally, dozens of women helped by Webster-certified chiropractors during their pregnancies and labors,” says Ryan. “I have worked as a childbirth educator since 2003, but it wasn’t until I met Kristen Hosaka, D.C., a Webster-certified chiropractor, in 2009, that I really learned about the benefits of chiropractic care during pregnancy, labor and the postpartum period. She has been a regular guest speaker in my childbirth classes ever since! My couples are having more comfortable pregnancies, babies in better positions, and good birth experiences.”

Donna had seen how chiropractic improved the births of hundreds of her students. As she developed her own natural childbirth education curriculum, she included chiropractors as an important part of the birth team. “When I was writing the Birth Boot Camp curriculum, there was never any doubt that chiropractic would be a part of the program,” she says. “When we refer to the birth team, it encompasses the midwife, doula and chiropractor! Couples who take the classes online have the privilege of hearing from Dr. Hosaka and witness her adjusting a pregnant woman. Couples that take live classes will often have the opportunity to hear from a Webster-certified chiropractor when he or she visits as a guest speaker.”

Getting the chance to meet, talk with, and watch a skilled chiropractor work is a powerful part of Birth Boot Camp classes. Many pregnant women fear chiropractic, especially during pregnancy. Meeting with a doctor of chiropractic and seeing him or her in action is a powerful teaching technique and is part of the reason the students feel so comfortable seeking chiropractic care. Claire Dodge, another Birth Boot Camp instructor, has also noticed the positive change that chiropractic can bring to her students’ births, both physically and emotionally.

“Chiropractic care throughout pregnancy, by a skilled doctor trained in Webster technique, makes a world of difference in a woman’s experience of pregnancy and birth,” says Dodge. “The common aches and pains of pregnancy are resolved, and the baby is typically able to

choose an optimal position for birth. The families in my classes who chose to incorporate chiropractic care into their prenatal care have visibly happier, healthier pregnancies. Evidence has shown that women under chiropractic care report easier births, shorter labor times, and lower rates of interventions. I am always happy for families that chose to add in chiropractic care, because it often significantly impacts their pregnancy and birth experience for the better.”

When you work with pregnant women who desire a natural birth, you will quickly come to understand the importance of chiropractic in achieving their goals. With all the other information and knowledge we share with birthing women, it makes sense to include the role of chiropractic as an aid in optimal birth.

Those who care for birthing women don’t just want them to survive the birth process. We want women and families to have a healthy and enjoyable pregnancy. We want these families to have a glorious and triumphant birth. We want birth to be experienced as it is meant to be: full of joy and power. Chiropractic is an essential part of not just birth, but childbirth education, and it has the ability to change birth as we know it.

—Sarah Clark

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