

Lynne Tuxford in the second two of her six stories about home births, talks to a doctor who does home deliveries and one of Auckland's three domiciliary midwives.

Book in advance

Rukmini Venkataiah had her second baby at home two months ago — her first was born in hospital.

She sums up her attitude to both deliveries in this way.

"After my son was born in hospital I felt 'never again'.

"When my daughter was born at home I felt I could have half a dozen more children.

Rukmini originally intended to have a hospital birth at Waitakere Hospital where her doctor does Le Boyer deliveries.

"The midwives in Auckland were all booked but there were a few cancellations so I was finally able to have a home birth."

Rukmini says there is no comparison between home and hospital births.

"In hospital they tend to treat you like a patient.

"I had a long labour the first time and the nurses kept looking in and saying things like 'haven't you had that baby yet!'"

"I felt I was the only woman who had ever taken so long to have a baby.

"At home it was so different.

"I had a 24-hour labour and I was happy and relaxed all the time.

"My husband was relaxed at home but in the hospital he was tense all the time.

"The atmosphere was light and happy."

Rukmini believes breathing techniques and relaxation are important for women having their babies at home.

"They're not emphasized enough.

"You have to know the breathing techniques really well.

"I found that I was using the techniques when I had contractions, even when I was asleep.

"It's very important to be relaxed, especially during contractions."

Rukmini says preparation is an important part of home births and she spent a lot of time reading books on childbirth.

"You need to be well informed," she says.

Her feelings are shared by Sharon Milne who also had her son at home three months ago — but doesn't advocate home births for everyone.

"Birth is a personal, individual thing," she says.

"I don't like it when people who have babies at home make those who have theirs in hospital feel as though they've copped out.

"After I talked to Carolyn Young, one of the Auckland midwives, I wondered what I was doing thinking of hospitals and decided to have a home birth."

Like Rukmini, Sharon read all she could about home births and practised breathing and relaxation.

"I really didn't find the breathing so helpful but it is important to know it," she says.

For it to work really well you need to know it so well it becomes second nature.

"I taught myself relaxation and I was completely relaxed all the time which was so helpful."

Sharon had a 33-hour labour and her son turned half way through.

"After 28 hours we were

getting worried and I was exhausted because I'd had very little sleep before going into labour.

"The midwife I had, Irene Hogan, decided to try acupuncture.

"We hadn't discussed this beforehand but I had made my decision and had absolute faith in her and what she said went as far as I was concerned."

Once the needles were in acupoints in Sharon's hands and feet her labour changed.

"It was really quite dramatic," she recalls.

"I was getting close to transition and suddenly everything sped up and Zachary was born.

"The acupuncture came too late to ease any of the pain but it sped things up and had dramatic results."

Despite the difficulties in labour, Sharon never felt as though she wanted to go to hospital.

"I would have gone if Irene had told me it was necessary but I was content to stay at home."

Both Sharon and Rukmini are full of praise for the midwives.

"She becomes one of your family — she is not a guest or a visitor, she is there all the time and makes everything so light," says Rukmini.

"It's so different from hospital because you get to know her and trust her."

The midwife makes one visit to an expectant mother.

She is with the mother during labour and after the birth for at least an hour.

She also makes home visits every day for two weeks.



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