

Home births on increase

Three years ago Anne Sharplin was the only domiciliary midwife in the Bay of Plenty. Now with the growth of the home-birth movement the number of midwives has increased.

Anne Sharplin was in Whakatane recently to discuss the home-birth movement at a meeting of the local home-birth association.

About 20 women attended the meeting, the theme of which was Home Birth Legal, Safe and Free.

"A lot of women just do not realise that home births are legal and free."

She said that statistics also showed that giving

birth at home is also very safe.

There are fewer premature babies born at home. Also 99 per cent of the babies born at home are successfully breast-fed.

The rate of sickness for both mother and child is also lower and the number of mothers who suffer post-natal depression is significantly lower.

A proportion of two per cent of home-birth mothers experience post-natal depression whereas the national average is around 20 per cent.

Anne Sharplin added that home-birth babies put on a

lot of weight in the first few weeks of their life.

"This is basically because the mother and child are never separated."

Anne Sharplin said that the home-birth association was not anti-hospital but rather pro-home birth.

"There has to be a balance. All our mothers are booked into hospital when their babies are expected. It is just common sense really."

One of the main principles behind the home-birth movement is to provide women with choices.

"Women need to be aware that they have choices

in where, when and how they give birth."

She said that many women felt empowered by giving birth at home.

"The woman is surrounded by all her own things and in an atmosphere that is very supportive and caring. This makes many women feel like the queen bee."

The home-birth movement started in Auckland in 1974. Since then it has grown so that there are now around 18 home-birth associations in New Zealand and in 1988 there were close to 4000 documented home-births.