

Interview with Homebirth Midwife Jill Edwards

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By Lisa Marie Morgan

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Jill Edwards completed her midwifery and naturopathic physician training at National College of Natural Medicine in Portland, Ore. Edwards and her business partner, Katherine Zieman, run Vibrant Family Medicine & Midwifery in Gresham, Ore., and are among the highest sought midwives in east Multnomah county. They have a 10 percent transfer rate and a 3 percent caesarian birth rate. Here are a few of Dr. Edwards’ thoughts on birthing at home.

*Note: Transfer is moving mom from her her birth space into the hospital, usually due to complications with labor.



How long have you been a midwife and how many births have you attended?

I was licensed in 2008 and I have attended over 150 births.

Can you address the safety of a homebirth?

I am well trained at spotting a problem and I’m happy to transport if that is what is needed. At prenatal visits mom and I get to know each other, so we know when something changes in labor. Mom’s intuition is huge, and so is my intuition for that matter. If something is off, we’re going to go through the steps to identify the problem and if something is wrong, we’re going to the hospital. Mom and baby should be safe wherever they deliver.

At what point would you transfer a mom to the hospital?

If momma's labor isn't progressing, if she has a fever- indicating infection, if baby's heart rate isn't responding, if mom is in too much pain. The worst case scenario is an epidural in the hospital.

How do you feel about having to transport a mom?

I call this a timely transport, not a failed homebirth, which is 1 out of 100 for me. Whatever the case, we needed those antibiotics or that epidural. Me and my patients are respectful to hospital staff. I explain what will happen but mom has to say the words in the hospital.

I've heard people say homebirth would stress them out because they need their house to be clean, bigger, etc. Can you address that?

We have delivered a baby in a 10x12 room on a single (size) bed, a dresser and all the wood to be used for flooring for the living room. There was an ND, a second ND, three or four students, four kids, and each had a friend. There was a gazillion people rotating in and out, it was a party. That was atypical. But we work in lots of small spaces and we always clean up when we go, we leave no messes.

What is one of your most memorable birth experiences?

The most beautiful is when you show up and you just hang out... I tell moms to imagine your birth as boring. More interesting births are usually more complex.

If you could share one piece of wisdom with laboring mothers, what would it be?

Stay hydrated, for three reasons; It keeps contractions coming, keeps you from getting too comfortable and for recovery. Water is good inside and out.

Do you have any advice for dads and partners?

Each contraction will be different. Momma may change from one contraction to the next, don't be offended.

What do you enjoy most about being a midwife?

Since I am also a family doctor, I get to follow the kids as they grow and become who they are going to be.

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