

HEALTH

Home birth explained

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You're pregnant. For many women these two words could send shock waves throughout their bodies.

While some may be happy and ready to become a mom, others may feel anxious and worried. With a flurry of emotions - whether you are happy or sad, excited or anxious - all pregnant women will have to figure out a birth plan.

But as medical costs continue to rise, many women are exploring their options including having their babies at home.

Later this week a group of expecting moms, coupled with midwives, birth experts and partners will gather in Muizenberg to discuss issues around home birthing. The informal event will be hosted by Home Birth South Africa in Muizenberg.

Early beginnings

In 2010, while working as doula Lana Petersen and Ruth Ehrhardt became frustrated with not being able to provide information on home births to expecting moms.

A doula is a woman who offers continual emotional and physical support to a labouring woman (and her partner).

Together they decided to start hosting home birth gatherings where doulas, midwives and interested parties sat together and shared their stories. Home Birth South Africa was formed and a website with everything expecting parents need to know created.

Here women share their stories and photographs of home birth.

Misconceptions

Safety, cleanliness and complications are some of the main issues faced by Home Birth South Africa.

Petersen explains despite a long history of home births across the world, with modern-day medical procedures, many still perceived giving birth to be a medical procedure.

She says birth is a natural physiological process and only requires medical intervention when there are complications.

Petersen explains in preparation for a home birth, the first step is for the mother to pick a caregiver.

"The midwife will then ensure the mother visits the hospital to ensure that a natural home birth is safe and there are no complications."

Throughout the pregnancy, the caregiver conducts regular check-ups and helps prepare women accordingly. "Midwives are

highly skilled and trained. They also work with back-up hospitals so in the case of emergency they are equipped to assist."

Choice

Petersen says the gatherings are held to help expecting parents explore their options.

She explains while they do not try and convince moms to take the home birth option, they aim to provide all the necessary information to ensure parents choose a birth plan that suits them.

"The one advantage is that because it's your home, you are not bound by hospital protocols. Here the mom can decide who she wants to have around her and she is not surrounded by strangers," she adds.

The gathering will take place on Sunday 1 March at 18 Axminster Road, Muizenberg from 14:00 to 16:00.

The gathering is aimed at those who have given birth at home, for those who have wanted home births, for those who are planning a home birth or are thinking about it or are just curious.

It is also for those whose home births did not go as they had wished. Midwives and doulas are also welcome.

Entry is R60 per person or R100 for two people.

For more information visit www.homebirth.org.za or call Ruth on 078 557 9070 or email ruth@homebirth.org.za or call Lana on 073 514 9754 or email birthjunkie@outlook.com.



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