

PICTURES: SIMON DACK AND EDDIE MITCHELL

SD2008098-7

SD2008098-4

# Women who hypnotise themselves for a birth free of pain



**GOOD THERAPY:** Claire Cornthwaite, left and above, with daughters six-month-old Arabella and Lillith, two. Below, Emma Tawse with three-day-old baby Anya

SD2008098-3



WHEN Claire Cornthwaite was pregnant with her first child, the prospect of giving birth terrified her.

She was determined to have a Caesarean to make the birthing process as pain-free as possible and started researching different methods.

She was searching on the internet when she came across a website on hypnobirthing - where a woman gives birth under self-hypnosis.

Mrs Cornthwaite, 28, who is now a mother-of-two, used the relax-

**FOR most women, the prospect of giving birth is stressful and frightening. But while medication, Caesareans and epidurals are often used, some women are now choosing a more natural method to help them give birth. RUTH LUMLEY talks to three women who turned to hypnobirthing.**

ation techniques when she gave birth to her first daughter Lillith, now two.

She said: "I found a practitioner and then went to five classes in the weeks running up to the birth. They involved self-hypnosis, breathing techniques and visuali-

sation to get your body ready. It helps you to understand what the body does."

She was so impressed by the techniques used in hypnobirthing that after Lillith's birth, she decided to become a practitioner herself.

Hypnobirthing was developed in

America 15 years ago and is based on the work of an English obstetrician and founder of the National Childbirth Trust, Dr Grantly Dick-Read.

He believed panic and fear made childbirth particularly painful and believed that by reducing the fear factor, labour could be made easier.

Mrs Cornthwaite, of Elder Close, Portslade, said: "There are women around the world who give birth where everything is made so clinical. Hypnobirthing teaches you to utilise what your body is designed

for. I did not suffer any pain when I had both of my children. My first birth was one and a half hours and my second daughter, Arabella, was born in four hours, both at Worthing Hospital."

Mrs Cornthwaite also uses the breathing and relaxation techniques she has learnt to help with her fear of flying.

And not only is she a hypnobirthing practitioner, she is also training to be a clinical hypnotherapist.

She said: "I am a university

student as well. It keeps me sane and gives me time away from being mum."

Emma Tawse, 36, of York Avenue, Hove, gave birth to her daughter Anya on Monday and had been attending hypnobirthing classes run by Mrs Cornthwaite.

The technique was recommended to her by her doctor after the birth of her first child, Austin, in October 2006, which proved traumatic.

She said: "I had such a bad birth with my first child so I started the

course with Claire at about 32 to 34 weeks into the pregnancy.

"I did not find it particularly over-involved with hypnotherapy but it gave me a lot of information about the birthing process and on how to relax and how to give birth."

Miss Tawse, a fitness and pilates teacher, found giving birth this time round a lot less stressful.

She said: "It was a much more natural process."

"I think giving birth can be quite scary for every woman but this time I trusted my body and went with what it wanted."

"I had my baby at Worthing Hospital and the midwife I had was very open to hypnobirthing. She did not step in unnecessarily. She was not pushy, which can cause people to tense up."

"When I compare the birth of my first child to this time, I

realise I had been through quite a lot with my first born when I consider how long it took me to get back up to speed for work."

Hypnobirthing is based on the belief that severe pain and labour should not go hand in hand. Women are taught techniques that allow the body's endorphins - nature's painkillers - to replace the stress hormones which make pelvic muscles constrict and cause pain.

Joanne Alabaster, of Boundary Road, Worthing, is also an advocate of hypnobirthing.

She used the method when giving birth to her son Louie, now four, in June 2006.

She said: "I was already having hypnotherapy for a fear of flying and then I was watching a programme about a woman giving birth under hypnosis."

"I did a little research and found a guy who was doing a course because I thought it was a better way of giving birth."

The course meant her husband, Marc, could also be involved in the birthing process and he also experienced the hypnosis himself.

She said: "It's all about visualisation and getting yourself into a situation where you are in a relaxed state. My visualisation was a beach where I used to go when I was younger."

"Once you are there your brain does not connect to the pain."

For details on hypnobirthing, visit [www.hypnobirthing.co.uk](http://www.hypnobirthing.co.uk) or [www.hypnomum.co.uk](http://www.hypnomum.co.uk).

[ruth.lumley@theargus.co.uk](mailto:ruth.lumley@theargus.co.uk)

## Relaxation increases soothing endorphins

HYPNOBIRTHING was designed by Marie Mongan to eliminate the fear-tension-pain syndrome before, during and after birthing, using relaxation and self-hypnosis techniques.

In a calm state, the body's natural endorphins replace the stress hormones that constrict the pelvic muscles and cause pain.

Hypnobirthing is now used in 26 countries and studies have shown fascinating differences between hypnobirthing and more conventional births.

The need for chemical and medical intervention is reduced, as is the risk of hyperventilation.

Hypnobirthing has also been found to reduce the first stage of labour by several hours, as well as eliminating fatigue during labour and promoting rapid post-natal recovery.



**DETACHED FROM PAIN:** Joanne Alabaster, right and with baby Louie and husband Marc, above. Emma Tawse, with baby Anya, left, attended hypnobirthing classes run by Claire Cornthwaite

For more information about health in your area visit [theargus.co.uk/localinfo](http://theargus.co.uk/localinfo)