

# IV Access

Category: Birth

written by Colleen T. Fogarty | December 9, 2024

During my second pregnancy, I was terrified I'd experience a postpartum hemorrhage, as with my firstborn, twenty-two months before. That bleeding was so serious the team had used every intervention short of a hysterectomy; they saved my life. As a family physician who attended births, my trauma from the hemorrhage interfered with my ability to attend births. I eventually gave up my maternity practice.

Our family physician, who had skillfully managed both pregnancies, assured me I would get an IV during early labor. My first baby had come fast, so she told me to call her as soon as I went into labor.

When I woke at thirty-eight weeks in the wee hours with a "funny feeling" and a sense that the baby would come soon, I called my doctor right away. I knew she would ask me: Was I having contractions? No. Did I have any fluid, signs of breaking the bag of waters? No. Any vaginal bleeding? No. Obstetric teams don't typically place much stock in "funny feelings," but she told me to go into the hospital and she'd meet shortly. She again assured me that I'd get an IV.

A word about IV's. . . Despite many hospitals providing routine IVs for women in labor, the evidence shows they aren't medically necessary for low-risk women, which I was for the first birth. My doctor and I had agreed I didn't need one. Until the bleeding started. With this pregnancy I was considered high risk for hemorrhage.

When my husband and I arrived at the hospital, now with gentle contractions, an experienced labor nurse assumed my care. I asked her for my IV. Our doctor hadn't arrived yet, and she said we'd "wait til the doctor arrived." I nearly panicked; never had I imagined begging for an IV. I knew I was in early labor and was pretty sure the easiest time for her to get the IV into me was "now" when the contractions weren't bad. She remained unconvinced. I pleaded, "Angela, PLEASE put the IV in now!" She was unmoved. Soon enough the doctor arrived, and I got my coveted IV.

From there labor progressed quickly and in under two hours our second son was born. After the placenta I received a shot of oxytocin, and there was no excess bleeding. Leo was a perfect second born, calm and quiet from the get-go, and the rest of the hospital stay was blessedly uneventful.

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