



### Hannah's Story

Before my son was born, when someone asked about my birth plan, I told them that I wanted to be “open to the experience.” If labor progressed on its own, I wanted an unmedicated delivery, but if I had to be induced or have a C-section, I would laugh and say, “obviously all bets are off.” Having heard horror stories about induced labor, I was terrified of laboring for 30 hours in an uncomfortable hospital room hooked up to monitors and IV drugs. So, when my due date was 11 days in the rearview mirror and induction became a reality, I was fully prepared to abandon my hopes of an unmedicated birth experience. When, in tears, I voiced my fear to the Vanderbilt Nurse Midwives, they reassured me that induction is quite often a very positive experience, and that, while a departure from my birth plan, I did not have to abandon it completely. I was cautiously optimistic. And terrified, of course.

The morning my induction arrived, and I was given cytotec, a drug that is used to ripen the cervix. Two hours later, my water broke and labor progressed on its own from there. Six and a half hours of standing, squatting, showering, doing hip circles on my yoga mat, and primal moaning later, our precious baby boy was born. After he arrived, I kept saying, “I can’t believe I did that. I can’t believe I did that.” The scary mental image of induction I had was very different from my reality that day, and I wouldn’t trade my delivery for anything in the world.

What I learned in the process of labor and delivery is that absolutely anything is possible with the right support. The Vanderbilt Nurse Midwives, along with my tireless husband and our doula Ashley, were the right support for me that day. Bethany, our midwife, coached me every step of the way -- from gently reminding me of my goals when I was ready to get an epidural (or nitrous oxide! Or anything!), to teaching me how to “ride” a contraction, and cheering me on as I pushed, and pushed, and pushed out that nine-and-a-half-pound bundle of magic. Giving birth is a life-changing, paradigm-shifting, soul-defining experience. I am forever grateful to the Vanderbilt Nurse Midwives for making mine so incredible.

~ Hannah R.