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Experiences with EPI-NO

How it all began:

The arco Maternity Clinic was founded in August 2000.

In summer 2008 we were able to welcome the 550th baby into the world. Since November 2001 more than 500 pregnant women have trained successfully with the EPI-NO pelvic floor trainer (see statistics).

Were we, as midwives, sceptical about EPI-NO? Very much so!

At that time we received the widely distributed EPI-NO publicity, had a demo instrument sent to us which at first landed in a drawer, - an “engineered” training of the pelvic floor to prepare the perineum was contrary to our philosophy of natural and integral birth assistance.

In July 2001 three women who were having their first child gave birth one after the other with a strikingly shortened expulsion period of less than half an hour and without any kind of perineum injury. As was discovered later, all three women (they knew each other privately) had decided themselves to train with the EPI-NO, without us midwives knowing. That made us prick up our ears. We gave the EPI-NO information folder to a successful therapist we knew who offers acupuncture massage according to Penzel and asked him to check the instrument for what he might consider any negative effects, if used in the perineum region. After Mr U. declared that he was neither for nor against the instrument, we decided to test the EPI-NO pelvis trainer in our maternity clinic during half a year and to recommend that all women train with the instrument.

After the amazing and extremely positive results of the first half test year, the EPI-NO has since November 2001 been an indispensable part of the “inventory” in our house.

Our recommendations for use:

- Daily training from the 36th week of pregnancy on, optimally 2 x a day in a relaxed and undisturbed atmosphere.
- Preheat the perineum region if required with a warm damp compress, a hayseed pack or a hip bath.
- Training time not less than 10 min., according to the instructions for use, daily increase the diameter of the balloon by inflating right up to the limit where a feeling of tension is noticeable.

- Breathe deeply several times into this tension, close your eyes and visualize the little head of the baby, then press the balloon slowly out of the vagina – we prefer to use the word “push”.
- The training is recommendable for all pregnant women, whether expecting a first child or after several births, whether there was once a birth with an intact perineum or with a perineal tear or an episiotomy. Just one birth where the perineum did not tear does not necessarily guarantee that with a second birth the perineum will not tear. A heavier birth weight of the unborn child or a special posture or position of the child can very much change the state of the perineum during a birth.

How do we bring our customers to train with EPI-NO:

Many of our customers are at first rather sceptical. We midwives therefore bring up the subject of EPI-NO right from the beginning.

- First our customers receive, together with our clinic brochure, the info flyer of EPI-NO.
- During the monthly information evening, the possibility of training with EPI-NO is mentioned.
- During the preliminary talk, during which our customers definitely register with the maternity clinic, we take approx. 10 min. to introduce EPI-NO. In the 35th week of pregnancy we hand out EPI-NO, the consultation and the briefing take approx. ½ hour:
- We tell about the success which our customers have had through training with EPI-NO. We make clear that a traditional perineum massage does NOT replace the training with EPI-NO, but is better than not preparing the perineum at all.
- It is also important to explain to the pregnant woman that the training with EPI-NO is NOT a romantic matter – the training, and that is absolutely the correct term – because it **is** training and one must be mentally prepared as if one were going to a fitness studio and concentrating on the stomach muscles or the biceps, only that here it is concentrated training of the pelvic floor muscles.

In the case of considerable scepticism or even of anxiety, we encourage the customer to at least try out the EPI-NO, if the scepticism still remains or the woman decides against EPI-NO, we accept her decision. The person concerned should recognize the sense of the training and she should not feel forced or be traumatized by it.

Ultimately, our statistics say enough about the success - that numerous women have successfully trained with EPI-NO before the birth - to animate other customers to do this too. Only 3 perineum cuts in 8 years activity with over 550 births, and this only as used in childbirth, is a motivating indicator!

Our experiences with EPI-NO:

Through the training with EPI-NO, the need for episiotomy and the spontaneous perineum tear rate have sunk significantly.

The expulsion phase has in more than 70% of all births been shortened by at least half the time. The anxiety of many pregnant women concerning the “passage of the head” is discussed and can already be dissipated before the birth – many women speak after the birth of a “recognition effect” during delivery of the head because of the preceding training with EPI-NO.

In particular with women who have experienced births that ended with forceps – or vacuum birth - which meant they experienced no conscious pressing phase, the “experience beforehand” of the passage of the head by the pressing out of the balloon at the end of the respective training with EPI-NO is of great importance.

Without question the pressing phase, as indeed the whole birth, is associated with pain. We, thus, speak quite consciously of labour. EPI-NO helps here too to prepare for this imminent situation, for this extraordinary experience, to accept the pain.

In conclusion, it should be said:

Each midwife learns and knows the active form of perineum protection, for many midwives it is a privilege to be active there where the child arrives and to avoid a rapid passage of the head and thus possible injury to the perineum. We midwives from the arco Maternity Clinic go so far as to say that an active protection of the perineum by the midwife is, after training with EPI-NO, no longer necessary. There is nothing more wonderful and fulfilling for the woman giving birth, her partner and for us midwives than for the woman to push the little head of her child with her own hand or the hand of her partner. She knows herself intuitively also through the training with EPI-NO, how much feeling and dosing this procedure requires. These births are the ones with the fewest perineum injuries and it is the most dignified, active and integral way to accompany a birth. To experience woman and man as an entity, we midwives remain in the background as extras who can call on their professional knowledge at any time and whenever necessary.

On the basis of our several years of experience, we can warmly recommend the EPI-NO pelvic floor trainer to every pregnant woman as preparation for the birth as well as for the time after the birth when she is retrieving her figure.

Kehrsiten, 24th of November, 2008

Irmgard Hummler, qualified midwife

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