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Hypnosis takes pain out of labour

By KATHRYN SHINE

KATHRYN Barton wanted to be "put under" for the birth of her son, Connor — but drugs weren't the answer for her.

Instead she chose hypnosis for the birth.

Ms Barton wasn't in a trance, but she was using hypnotic techniques such as relaxation and meditation.

"It really helped me relax when when I was having contractions," she said.

"It helped me cope. I didn't have to have any drugs."

Ms Barton, 29, of Westmead, is one of a growing number of women using hypnosis or hypnotherapy in childbirth.

The idea is that they are less likely to experience pain if they are relaxed and unafraid.

Dr Alan Fahey, the principal lecturer at Sydney's College of Medical Hypnosis, said hypnotherapy

aimed to reduce the fear associated with childbirth.

"It's all how you use your imagination and what you tell yourself," he said.

"Hypnosis boosts your immunity to pain and tension. The more relaxed you are, the less likely it is that pain will reach your conscious mind."

Hypnosis techniques used included visualising a special place, inducing numbness, deep breathing and time distortion.

"Someone who has been hypnotised can experience time differently," Dr Fahey said.

"The length of time of a contraction will seem to be very short and the time between contractions will seem long."

Dr Fahey said hypnosis had been used in childbirth since the late 19th century, but it had only recently become popular and he thought that was due to a shift towards natural childbirth.

However hypnosis did

not guarantee a drug-free delivery, he said.

Women who wanted to use the technique had to have a flexible attitude about the birth.

"If they think I've got to have this baby without using any drugs, that's a recipe for depression," he said.

"That's not life. It's not perfect."

Dr Fahey teaches hypnosis to health professionals such as obstetricians, GPs, psychologists and midwives.

He has just finished work on a series of CDs for women who want to learn hypnosis for childbirth.

Ms Barton used those CDs to learn the techniques during her pregnancy.

Although Connor, born two weeks ago, was a month premature, she was ready to put her practice to the test.

"It all happened very quickly but I still found that I could do the relaxation and visualisation," she said.

Ms Barton said the hypnosis had also helped her recuperate after the birth.



PERFECT DELIVERY: Kathryn Barton and new son Connor.

Picture: SEAN DAVEY