Catching Up with Jenna Pastuszek

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IN THIS EPISODE

Los Angeles actor, singer, and mom of two Jenna Pastuszek's first birth came with some unexpected twists — and this time she set out on a very different path. She catches up with Dr. Elliot Berlin, DC on birth, motherhood, and rehearsals, and what 'break a leg' means to her now (especially in the third trimester).

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DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: My guest today is a returning friend of the podcast of Los Angeles-based actor, singer, and mom of two who recently welcomed her second baby. Her first birth came with some unexpected twists, and this time she set out on a very different path. Between rehearsals, performances, and parenting a toddler, she was determined to write her own sequel. One full of intention, courage, and maybe just a little drama. You know, in showbiz they say break a leg, but you're not actually supposed to do it, especially in your third trimester. I'm pregnancy-focused chiropractor, Dr. Elliott Berlin, and you're listening to the Informed Pregnancy Podcast. Jenna Pasta-Zach, welcome back to the podcast.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: What an intro. Thank you so much.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: My pleasure. I was up all night working on it. Me and chat GPT. I got to be honest. So none of that might be true, actually. It could all be just hallucinations. You might not even have any kids.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: I might not. Anyway, yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So here we are. To find out the truth, you were on the podcast previously, and you wrote blogs for us that are hilarious, and then you had another baby. So why don't we recap what happened with the first one, and then we'll take it from there.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Okay. The long and the short of it was I had difficulty getting pregnant with my first, my son. And so I had to do time dinner course to make that happen. Worked with Dr. Meredith

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Brower. How was that on your sex life? Too soon?

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Yeah. The thought of having sex three days in a row, like you're supposed to, I was like, I can't do that. That's way too much for me. So we did two.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. Two out of three ain't bad? Two out of three ain't bad, as I said. Did it work?

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Sure did. I didn't even tell my husband that we were doing it twice on purpose, because I couldn't handle the pressure of him knowing.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I feel like it's usually the other way.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: I know. I know. He thought he was getting lucky. He was like, something's wrong with you. Why do you want to have sex with me two nights in a row? Twice in the same month. Anyway, so we did time dinner course. And we both got lucky because there was a child. How about that? Then my baby was breeched, as you know, pretty much the entire pregnancy. And we did an ECV. That didn't work. I did turning babies. That didn't work. We did acupuncture. I did Cairo with you, obviously. So there I was with my scheduled C-section looming a few days away. And I was swimming laps and trying to do everything, lying upside down on ironing boards. And at the last minute, my water broke. And I remember going to the bathroom and thinking to myself, like, wow,

JENNA PASTUSZEK: am I just in the point of pregnancy where I'm just peeing my pants now? Is this it? And then my husband was like, why do you keep getting up to go to the bathroom? Like, what's wrong? And I was like, I think my water broke. And he's like, okay. And I was like, so what do I do? He's like, I think you call your doctor and we go to the hospital. I was like, right. So we went to the hospital. We had an emergency C-section and my son was born. And then we had all sorts of trouble with an upper lip and a tongue tie. And some serious latching issues and also some undersupply milk issues.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So grand old postpartum?

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Yeah, grand old postpartum. I mean, because postpartum is not easy when none of those things happen, when everything just goes smooth.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Does it ever just go smooth?

JENNA PASTUSZEK: I mean, I think it's smoother than that. I just feel like what they don't tell you and what they should tell you is that something is going to go wrong somewhere. Whether it's you have trouble getting pregnant, whether it's you have a difficult labor, whether it's you have breastfeeding issues. Like, you know, something is going to go wrong and you should just know that.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, yes, that is true. I mean, there's nothing is expected to go according to plan, meaning there's always the expectation that things can go off script. But you do live theater.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Yeah, that's showbiz, baby. So I just kind of, you know, roll with it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Roll with it. But if you could look at that whole first experience and look back at it and say, OK, we're going to do another run of this show. Let's make these edits. What would you have done differently?

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Decent question. I truly don't think any of it. I wouldn't have done any of it differently, especially with my son being breech. I mean, there's really nothing that I could do about that. And after he was born, the doctor said, you know, I looked around in there and thought to myself, like, why was he breech? And I was like, no, no, no. After meeting him one day, I know that he was just breech because he felt like it. That is just his personality. And so who does he get that from? No idea. I'm not sure. He was actually just a chef for Halloween and it was 92 degrees outside and he was running around in his full chef costume, refusing to take it off because he was committed to the bit. No idea where he gets it from. No idea.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: But yeah, I mean, going through that and having him be breech and having to make amends with my birth plan that I had wanted to do and really like the feelings that I was having around entering motherhood, having a c-section. I am actually so glad that I had to learn those lessons because it really taught me an important lesson that you learn as a parent, which is you don't have all of the control anymore. And there are now two people who are involved in this relationship. And so that entire experience just really helped me release and trust and accept that there's going to be a plan B sometimes that you might not have wanted, you know, but you have to just accept it and then deal with it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: How did you get through the postpartum hurdles?

JENNA PASTUSZEK: It takes a village, as Hillary Clinton said. So I'm just so grateful for all of the people that I've met who are on my life team, but also were strong parts of my postpartum team. So my lactation consultant, obviously you.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, obviously.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: You think you just crack backs? I also crack jokes. I was going to be nicer than that, but you know what? Yeah, you just crack backs, crack jokes, that's it. Maybe heal other parts of our souls that we don't know or even are in need of cracking, you know?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Please go on.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: No, now I've been nice to you once, so we need to move on. So yeah, that was my first kid.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, okay. So I mean, did you know right away, like maybe I'll do this again? Or was that iffy?

JENNA PASTUSZEK: It was a little iffy. I thought to myself, wow, like no one can get cooler than this guy. I just love my kid. And I remember driving home from the hospital and thinking to myself, like, how amazing is it that I just met this human two days ago, and yet I would hurl myself in front of a bus. The grenade for you. Yeah, and so I, thanks, Bruno Mars. I have a younger brother who's three years younger than me. My husband has a younger brother. My mom is one of five. My dad was one

of three. And so I did always know that I wanted a sibling relationship to be part of my son's experience. But I also was, you know, especially I think as an actor, one of the hardest parts about being pregnant is that

JENNA PASTUSZEK: you are not supposed to be pregnant for as long as possible. Then suddenly you are showing. And so there's nothing that anyone can do about the fact that you're pregnant except try to hide it if it's necessary to be hidden until you then have the baby. And then you're expected to be immediately back into performance shape physically and also mentally immediately, as if you never were pregnant at all.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Right.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Yeah, and so having gone through that with my son, I was apprehensive about doing it again because I thought, you know, well, what if I can't get back to, you know, my physical shape after my second kid? Or, you know, what if I choose the wrong time to try to get pregnant again? And all of that. And ultimately, as with the entire pregnancy journey, like, again, going back to the control, you have no control over any of this. So it took us six months to get pregnant again. We had to do a time dinner course again with Dr. Brower. Well, not with Dr. Brower.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, she had just guided the.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: It's her recommendation.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. Yeah. Okay. One of my favorite things is when your kid grows up and listens to the fact that you had to have sex twice in a row to create him, you know, when he's listening to the archives. So you did make the decision after all that thought, let's do this again. Let's have another one.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And then it didn't come easy. All right. Let's take a little break. When we come back, we'll find out how you got another one going, what the second pregnancy and birth was like. We'll be right back. Welcome back. We're having time segments here with Jenna Pastuzek. Time segments on time dinner course with Jenna Pastuzek. Yeah. This is our second segment right in a row, and it's really feeling like a lot of pressure on me. So there's that. So the time intercourse didn't work though, the second time.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: No. It turns out that we needed to adjust the medication. I had to change medications. I had to change dosages. And actually, I guess it did work the first time we did it again with Dr. Brower. However, I had a chemical pregnancy. So I guess I was about, I don't really know actually how many weeks, maybe six.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, five or six weeks, and you get a positive pregnancy test.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Yeah. Actually, I didn't even have that. I just had copious amounts of blood. I was like, this doesn't look or good, feel right, right? And then they were like, oh, confirmed you were pregnant. So the positive about that was that I could get pregnant, and the negative about that was that it was not viable. So yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So where did you go from there? So then you're adjusting all the medications?

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Then we adjusted all the medications, and this is also, I was doing two shows at once. I was doing two new musicals at the same time, and one in LA, and then one that was traveling. So we were traveling to Philadelphia. So in and amidst all of that travel and scheduling, I was also trying to figure out when to do this fertility round again. So we did it when I got back, and it actually happened to be basically the same timing that I did with my son. So my daughter is, she's three years and two weeks younger than my son. So I was basically pregnant at the exact same time.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Same pattern, yeah. Yeah. We have that with our kids. They're June 1st, June 7th, June 10th, and April 30th of 2004, 6th, 8th, and 10th.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Wait, really?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. So what was happening nine months before June? Rosh Hashanah. The Appletini. When I was done, I was like- Happy New Year.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Happy New Year. Baby, no more Appletini for us.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, maybe actually you were atoning.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: I was 10 days later in Yom Kippur.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, somewhere in between the joy and the atone. Yeah. So you get knocked up again. Now, considering your first experience, I guess you have two choices. So you just do a repeat C-section or aim for a vaginal birth after cesarean. Did you have a preference and why?

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Well, first of all, I had to switch OB-GYNs because my previous OB-GYN went out of network. But the last thing that she said to me was, because I said, if I want to have another kid, what is the protocol here? And she said, just so you know, I will let you go for a vaginal birth if you want, but I won't induce you. And so you'll need to go into labor spontaneously. So I was so upset that I didn't get to have a vaginal birth the first time that I was like, well, if I'm allowed to try for it, why wouldn't I? And also I'm a curious person and I like to learn it myself. So if people, I heard all the time, oh, C-section recovery is easier, or oh, no, vaginal birth is easier or whatever. I was like, well, let me be the judge of that.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: I am going to try to have both if I can.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So yeah, you'd like to experience all the flavors and then write a little guide about which ones are better.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Exactly.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: In Europe, right? Because a lot of people after they have a cesarean birth say, I already been there, done that, let me just do what I know. Some people are like, I already have like whatever the trauma is there, the wound, so why ruin two pieces of apparatus? This is not me speaking. This is what people tell me. Just different ideologies on how to go with it. But you wanted the vaginal birth experience.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Yeah, you know, I wanted to like live on the edge a lot of people go for the C-section again, especially when they have a toddler at home because they're like, I can schedule this, I can have help, you know, all of that. And I thought about that. And I also again thought about what you just mentioned, which is like, well, this is the devil I know. So like, I already know this recovery. I know I survived it. I know it was fine. So like, I'm sure it would be fine again. But there's something in me that wants to make my life sometimes as hard as possible. I just was like, well, I don't know. I should just go for it. But the cool thing the second time was that I went into it with this mentality that,

JENNA PASTUSZEK: you know what, if I have to have a C-section, it's fine because I've already had it. So I'm not going to have a meltdown about not getting to give birth the way that I want to because I recognize that this is sort of out of my control and I'm going to just have to go with it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That's cool. That takes some pressure off.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Yeah. And so actually at my 20-week appointment, the baby was breached. And at that point, that was actually when I talked to you. And I came in for a session and I said, oh, you know, well, this baby's breached too. And then you suggested, you were like, maybe we should do some energy healing work because, you know, have you ever considered that you might be holding on to something that perhaps is, I don't know, allowing the baby to hold on to something too and like just kind of stay in this position. And the minute that you said that, I was like, oh, I'm trying to be in control again. Like, who cares? Who cares? Like, if the baby wants to flip, great. If they don't, then whatever. I need to just get out of the way of this.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: And then right after that appointment, she flipped and she stayed head down for the rest of the time, which was really, really crazy.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: It was a cool energy session too. Like you really got into a zone where you were open energy sharing and your body, I felt your nervous system. And that's what I go for, the nervous system to kind of reboot, to kind of shut down for a little bit and come back online in just a much more calm, relaxed and functional way. Not like the feeling like you're being chased by a tiger, but on an energetic level, sometimes you are holding on to something that makes you sort of guard the baby and not want to let go. And so it was cool that the baby turned after that and then you're on your path to a potential VBAC.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Yeah. And so my new provider, when I was searching for providers, I wanted someone who had a similar philosophy to my old OBGYN, who would let me go for a VBAC if that's what I wanted to do, who would also schedule a C-section if that's what I wanted to do. So I found her in Dr. Jamie Tempko at Cedars and I loved working with her and I loved working with all the women at the practice. And as you mentioned in my intro, it turns out at around 32 weeks, and maybe we'll get to this, I broke my leg, but it wasn't discovered until about 36 weeks. And so once my OB actually ordered my x-ray and was the one to call me and tell me that I had a broken leg, at that point, she was like, you can definitely go for a VBAC if you want.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Because if I ever questioned your pain tolerance, you've been walking around

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: with a broken leg for six weeks. Yeah, you were literally walking on it. And you came in and we looked at your leg and we're like, wow, that's painful. Let's see if we can get some of the pain down, some of the swelling down, use laser on it. But it was definitely an uncommon pregnancy symptom to have pain in that area and also persistent not getting better.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Yeah, yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And you have no idea how you broke it, right?

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Well, I think that in June I was doing, so I was in the start of my third trimester, I was doing a show at the Kirk Douglas in Culver City. I was also flying back to the East Coast every week in June to do concerts on my nights off of the other play. So I was doing a lot of traveling. And also when I'm pregnant, I get horrible calf cramps. Like calf spasms, they're terrible. And so one day I remember that I woke up and I was having such a bad spasm that I woke up and I slammed my foot against the floor, like on the side of the bed to kind of like make the pain stop. And after that, I remember thinking like, wow, did a calf spasm like strain another muscle in my leg? My leg is killing me. It hurts so bad.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: And then I actually went and I performed one of my Judy Garland concerts. And I remember after the show, I was sleeping over at my music director's house and we were on the couch eating ice cream and he looked at my ankle and he was like, that is double the size of your other foot. And I was like, is it? It hurts. And he was like, yeah, that looks horrible. And so I think that it was some sort of connection to these calf cramps that I was having.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, I mean, maybe when you slammed your foot on the ground.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Yeah, maybe that. And then danced on it. I had the force to break my own leg or dance on it or whatever. But you know, no to the listeners. I was about to say no to the reader, but no to the listeners out there. Put three corks underneath your pillow if you have calf cramps and they will go away. Old wine tail, three corks.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Old wine tail. Does it matter what bottle?

JENNA PASTUSZEK: No.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Any three corks?

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Yep. Preferably a drunk bottle. That has been drank.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, you know, listeners, readers, try that out at home and send us some feedback and let us know how that works for you. But I would also recommend not slamming your foot into the floor, even if you have a calf cramp.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: It's the worst agony. I think that and nosebleeds are the two pregnancy symptoms that I was like, really? These like hair in weird places or like dark areolas. I mean, I can understand those kinds of things, but like nosebleeds, why?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Why do we have to add that on? And the heart attack in the leg or calf cramp. So you're walking around hobbling with like a brace on your leg.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: I'm hobbling around like a peg leg. Yeah, I don't even get a boot. I'm just dragging my sorry right leg behind me and complaining to every person I know about how much my leg hurts. And everyone is looking at me and being like, well, you know, small in ankles. That's just like part of pregnancy. Sure. You know, you're retaining fluid. I'm sure that that'll go away after you deliver. And I was like, but I could be pregnant for another two months. Like this can't be right, but I guess it is.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. So swollen ankles, I mean broken leg, broken leg. So this doctor that you switched to says if you want to go for a VBAC now that your head down, no problem.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Well, so she orders an x-ray because after a few visits of me saying, you know, she says, do you have any questions about anything? I say, yeah, my leg really hurts. And she's like, okay, you know what? We can order an x-ray. It's not going to show anything, but let's just go for it. And I said, all right. So we ordered the x-ray and lo and behold, it shows a non-displaced fibular fracture.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: The fibular is that smaller bone on the leg, the outer bone. And non-displaced meaning there's a crack in it, but it's not like two ends came apart.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So it's kind of, I guess, wouldn't you say like the best kind of break you can have? It's a clean break. It's going to heal well. Yeah.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: So I go to the orthopedic surgeon. She looks at it and she says, well, I guess you can put this boot on and keep your foot in the boot for the rest of your pregnancy and then come back the beginning of September after you've delivered. And I said, all right. So I walk out of the office limping out in my boot and I'm like, okay, bye everybody. I'm going to go deliver a baby in this boot. And they're all like, wait, wait, you know, you could take it off when you're pushing. And I was like, that was a joke. I know. Yeah, I got it. So at that point, my OB was like, okay, if you want to go for a VBAC, you can go for a VBAC. And I was like, great. Have I proven now that I have the pain tolerance of my Ukrainian people?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yes, you do.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: So the plan was that if I did not go into labor, I would be induced at 40 weeks and two days.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So unlike your other doctor, this doctor was comfortable with a little induction despite the VBAC.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Yeah, she wouldn't do the cervidrial, but she would do a pitocin drip. Her practice, they rotate. And so when she was on rotation, she said she would do it. And so I said, okay, great. Then she takes her insurance. How about it? And delivered at the hospital where Judy Garland's daughter Liza Minnelli was born and where Barbara Streisand has a heart center. So, you know, it's my kind of hospital.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: All your people.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: All my people. So I was still a little bit stressed because I didn't want to be induced. And also I had never been this pregnant before. Newsom was born at 39 weeks exactly. And so by this point, I was 39 and five, six. I can't remember. But I was like, this, I am over this. I don't want to be pregnant anymore. Middle of August, my toddler has three weeks off from daycare. I am in hell.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I mean, this puts me into a place of total suspense as to what's going to happen next. Because you don't want to be induced. You don't want to have a C-section. But you're over it. I can't do curb walking because I have a broken leg. I mean, you're essentially curb walking wherever you go because you have your built-in curb on your right leg. So I guess we should take a break and come back and find out how it all went down. We'll be right back with the rest of the story. Welcome back. We're talking to Jenna Pasek. And in our story, she is finally pregnant with her second baby. And the baby is head down. And she broke her leg because she had a calf cramp and she just slammed her leg into the ground. That's likely how it happened.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And then she's walking around in a boot and she's not in labor. And she's as pregnant as she's ever been at 39 weeks and five days or so. It's hot as heck. And she's just over it. Some people at that point are just like, induce me. Some people are just like, screw it. I'll just have the C-section. And some people are Ukrainian. So what did you do?

JENNA PASTUSZEK: So I drank the courts of the raspberry tea and I did all of the old wives witchy tale things. I came to see you like on the hour, every hour to get things going. I went back to my acupuncturist and was drinking the herbs and doing all of that kind of stuff. And then on us-

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And at that point, is sex an option?

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Yes. And that was, I think, what popped me into labor the first time. So I told my husband, it's time. It sounds like music, like bring up the drama music. And so, we're trying all the things. And then on a Sunday night, I'm having dinner with my husband and my mom who had come to town to help. We'd put my toddler to bed and we're sitting at the dinner table and I suddenly feel like a headbutt in my groin area. And then I cough-

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Who would do that to you?

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Yeah, I cough or I sneezed or something. And it was like the floodgates. And my water broke. And so I looked at them and I was like, I think my water just broke. And then I went to the bathroom and I was like, oh, it's definitely broken. And I literally went to myself, yes. And so I was like, guys, it's broken. We got to go. And so-

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Like last time, what do you think we should do now, honey?

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Well, and luckily my OB this time was like, listen, if your water breaks, it's not an emergency. You don't need to rush. Like finish your meal, take a shower, whatever you got to do, and then come to the hospital. So we finished packing the car and telling my mom instructions for what to do with my son. And we drove to the hospital, took Cedars from Highland Park, which is where we live, could sometimes take two hours to get to. And it took 20 minutes because it was a Sunday night.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, nice. Good timing, Jenna.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: What was funny is that my husband's like, I'll drop you off at the security desk and then I'll go find parking and come inside. And so I go up to the security guy and he's like, hey, how can I help you? And I was like, hey, I'm in labor. And he's like, what? He's like, you're in a boot and holding a pillow. And I was like, yeah, I'm good. You're the most chill labor person I've ever seen. And I was like, yeah, just show me where to go. 6-4, like whatever. By the way, it's a feedback. So I go in and-

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You didn't tell them?

JENNA PASTUSZEK: No, I didn't. But the nurses are like, okay, let's check if your water's broken. And I'm like, okay, you can check, but it's definitely broken. So they check and they're like, oh, confirmed is broken. And at that point, my OB had said, if you go into labor and you are going for the VBAC, I would recommend that you get the epidural just because if it's already in place, it will be easier if things go south and you got to have an emergency C-section. And I was like, fine, that's a fair trade. I will definitely do that to make everyone's life easier, no problem. So it's like 10 PM and the nurses are like, okay, well, if you're going to do the epidural, we should probably put it in now so that we can kind of do like a test batch

JENNA PASTUSZEK: to see if it works before things progress and then you might wanna be able to push the button and give yourself more or whatever. And so they put it in and I'm like, okay, yeah, you can run the trial amount. And they're like, okay. So they put it in, it's like 1030 and they're like, okay, we'll see you in a few hours. And by like 1231 AM, I'm like, I'm trying to push this button and it's like not working. I'm feeling a lot of pressure. Like this is a lot of pressure and I'm uncomfortable and I like, where's the epidural? And so they come back in and they're like, okay, well, you know, relax. Like, let's just check you. And then they're like, you're like nine and a half centimeters dilated. And I was like, oh, well, that makes sense

JENNA PASTUSZEK: why I'm feeling pressure. And I was like, well, can I have the epidural though? Because it's like really a lot of, and they're like, yeah, yeah, sure. So they give me the epidural and then they're like, okay, it's time to push. And I'm like, hold on. I can't feel my legs. Like, I know.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: But you didn't see that coming?

JENNA PASTUSZEK: I didn't.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, they should have seen that coming.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: I guess so. So then they're like, okay, well, we're gonna have to labor you down for 45 minutes to let this epidural wear off. So you can feel your legs again.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: By that, do they just mean like, just not do anything and let things proceed?

JENNA PASTUSZEK: They gave me like a peanut ball. My nurse was helping me change positions and change sides. Just trying to help the baby get a little lower down, but you're not pushing at all. No, I wasn't pushing at all. I was kind of just hanging out, eating ice chips, I think. They were great.

There's nothing like a hospital ice chip. And there's nothing like a hospital, what they call the like mom mocktail or whatever. That juice, that apple juice, cranberry juice.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, orange juice. I think about that juice all the time.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: That's the only reason I thought we shouldn't have a home birth. Well, the thing is, is that even if I bought those ingredients to make them at home, it wouldn't be the same. It has to be in those little plastic cups with the peel off lid. That's why. That's the argument against home birth. So anyway, so then they come back in. And they're like, okay, it's time to push. I think the baby's heart rate is dropping because they're like, don't panic. But like 20 people are going to roll into this room at the same time. And I was like, okay. So there I am.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: One of them is that security guard.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: One of them is a security guard.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: In parking.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: One of them is a doctor I've never met from this practice.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, from your group.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Yeah, she wasn't on call. And then I had my nurse on my right leg, my broken leg. And I had Ben, my husband, on my left leg. And so they're like, okay, it's time to push. And the way that the doctor explained pushing, she was like, so what's going to happen is you're going to inhale. Then you're going to hold your breath while you push. And then you're going to exhale. And then rinse and repeat. And we'll do like three in a row. And then we'll take a pause. And then we'll do three in a row and blah, blah, blah. And I was like, okay. And so I am really focusing on this breathing situation that they're explaining for me to do. But I'm also thinking in my head, this nurse on my right leg is not giving me enough friction to push back on.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: And so I start yelling at her and I'm like, lady, you have to hold my leg and give me a little bit of something to push against. And she's like, but your leg is broken. I was like, I don't care. Yeah, I don't care. I need the resistance. It's already broken. So who cares? And she's like, okay. And so her and Ben are holding my legs and pushing against them. And then all I can see from my head is the doctor in between my legs making this circular swirling motion with her hands. And the way I'm describing it, it's like I was watching her being like, wow, she's concocting a witch's world down there.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, double, double.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: And I'm like, what is she doing? And later Ben told me that she's keeping her hands there so that every time I stop the push, the head doesn't go back in. But for me, I was like, well, all I feel is a lot of pressure. And I see hands very wide apart, but inside me hypothetically looking like she's making a witch's stew. So I guess is this the magic of labor that people talk about?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, you missed out with the C-section.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Yeah. And so 20 minutes later, my daughter was born and I pushed for 20 minutes. And then we didn't know what I was having. So she comes out, they put her on my chest and they're like, Ben, do you wanna announce it? And he is so emotional because he wanted to have a daughter. And he's like, it's a girl. And I'm like, oh my God, it's a girl, what? I thought I was having another boy. My pregnancy was literally the exact same. I could have sworn this was a boy. And so I'm like, wow, this is a girl. And so then they are like, Ben, would you like to cut the cord? And he is like, I, I, I, I. And I'm like, give me the scissors. Welcome to the world, girl.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You cut the own cord, your own cord?

JENNA PASTUSZEK: I cut my own cord.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, that's cool.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: It was really cool.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Do you have a picture of that?

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh my God.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: I'll send it to you. And then I was like-

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: It's so you though.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Yeah, and then they were like, you know-

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And then you ate it right there.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Yeah, I ate that placenta. I said, give me, take a, I was like, take a picture of my placenta. I want to see what I grew. But they were like, you were so good at pushing because you're a singer and you're able to-

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, cause your lungs and your breath.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Yeah, like you're able to like functionally separate the two, like the inhale and the exhale and the holding and all of that kind of stuff. So you're very coordinated. That's really cool. And I was like, oh, wow, that's so cool. And so actually at some point, I recorded all these videos while I was pregnant to talk about the similarities between singing and prenatal Pilates and like basically prenatal strength training. So I need to release those on the interwebs.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Inborn Pregnancy Plus?

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Yeah, maybe I should do it there.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: We would love to host you. Anything you- Okay, wow, wow. With a picture of you biting into your rough placenta. So, congratulations. I know it's been a little bit now, but still I feel all the feels right now for you.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Yeah, it was cool. I had a cervical tear. So they told me that my cervix tore because my labor progressed so quickly. And that was a weird feeling to feel like the middle of my body was ripped. And then I also-

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Not in a good way.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Yeah. And I had a labial tear, which actually was more painful because it felt like I had a paper cut like on my vagina.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That doesn't even feel good on my finger.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: No, but I didn't have any other tearing. So that was it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Tear cervix in your labia.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Who needs either of those?

JENNA PASTUSZEK: What else would tear? You know, and so I knew we were at Cedars again. And so I was like, please put down my order for the 4 p.m. cookie and milk delivery because I'm hip to that.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Second case for hospital birth. Yeah, that's right. They're warm.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Warm baked cookies. Warm chocolate chips. Oh my God, they're so good. So yeah, it was a grand old time. I was like, okay, now that I've had both kinds of births, I can see the pros and cons of each. They are both, well, they're both a challenging recovery in different ways. C-section, you have just had seven layers of your abdomen cut open, right? But with vaginal birth, you just stretched out your entire vagina, butt area. It's like, I mean, pooping after I gave the vaginal birth, it took me like a week to figure out how to do that again. And I had to like talk my body into doing it because those muscles were so uncoordinated or I don't know, there's fear around it or something, but it was weird.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: What else postpartum, how did it compare?

JENNA PASTUSZEK: I think postpartum with a toddler at home

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: is a hellscape. It's a different situation.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: It's a different situation. When you have your first kid, in my experience, it's stressful because you've never had a kid before and you're also like, what have I done to my life now that I have this being that is relying on me at every waking moment. When you have a toddler and then you are also trying to recover yourself and also deal with a newborn, that provides its own set of logistical challenges and guilt and questioning of what you've done. But I felt so much more confident in my skills as a parent because I was like, no, they make weird gurgling sounds like when they're newborns, they just make weird noises. So I don't need to panic that she's gonna die at every second, like she's okay. And so there's just things that you know

JENNA PASTUSZEK: after the first time that the second time are a little bit more manageable.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I think that's a really good description of both of those things. Servicing two needy customers at the same time is very challenging physically and emotionally, but also like it's not your first time around the block.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Yeah, yeah. Now I can only imagine having three kids, four kids, like, does it get different?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I think it does get easier actually. The oldest kid gets old enough to be less needy and dependent and a little bit helpful.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Oh, that's nice.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So it's a little different there.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Like making casseroles helpful or-

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Depends on your kid, but they also, I think learning to service more than one needy customer is the biggest challenge. Adding to that is not as big of a transition, you know? Like you already figured out the juggle.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: All this and you hustle back to New York for the show you're doing.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Yeah, so the show that I had been doing in LA at the Kirk Douglas up until I was 33 weeks pregnant, it's a show called 44, the Obama musical, as told through the hazy recollection of Joe Biden. And I play Hillary Clinton and a smattering of other people. And so the company knew that I was pregnant and then they knew that I would go away and give birth. And then we also all knew that the show was transferring to New York. And we were gonna do an off-Broadway run at the Daryl Roth Theater in Union Square. And I was like, well, I'm definitely going to do that because since moving to LA and since having my kids a musical theater performer, and so I was like, this is what I wanna do and this is the work and so let's go and let's do this.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: And so postpartum was definitely different this time as well because I knew I had something to get back to quickly. With postpartum with my first kid, I had a lot of identity questions too about what would having a kid do to me as a creative, do to me as an artist mean for my performing career? And I didn't have any of those questions this time because I knew that I was gonna continue to be me and continue to do my work and that my kids would learn from me that they can be passionate about whatever they wanna be passionate about and do the work that fulfills them and I will support that. So yeah, so I knew that we would be traveling back to New York when my daughter was six weeks old to go into rehearsals and then at seven weeks old,

JENNA PASTUSZEK: I would go back into performances doing eight shows a week. And so the postpartum was more complicated because I was also juggling logistics of where are we gonna live and who is going to watch my daughter while I'm at work and what is my son gonna do because we have him enrolled in school in Los Angeles and he has friends and activities but also at the same

time, how much time away from his mom does he want to spend and all of that. And so we created a plan where my husband and my son would stay mostly in LA but come back and forth at least once a month and for longer periods of time at the holidays for Thanksgiving and the end of the year and that my daughter would come with me because presumably I would be breastfeeding her again

JENNA PASTUSZEK: and so she obviously would need my milk. Well, like my son, she also had an upper lip and tongue tie. So we had some feeding issues. She likes to latch. She finds comfort in that experience. My son was not interested in it at all and so that's been a nice bonding situation for us but she hasn't been able to transfer milk effectively from the breast. So again, I find myself exclusively pumping and feeding her the milk that I pump. And yeah, but I'm working with a company who's been nothing but supportive and actually I'm lucky in that a lot of the people in my show, both creatives, both producers and fellow castmates are parents. And so this was a really place. Yeah, a really great soft place to come back

JENNA PASTUSZEK: into performing because I've worked with these people for a few years and also they all get the parenting thing. So it's sort of a running joke when I'll be like, okay, I'm gonna go to the, you know, and everyone's like, oh, let Jenna off stage first so she can go pump. And I'm like, yep, my 15 minute intermission, gotta get it done.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Do people bring babies to the show?

JENNA PASTUSZEK: My coworker has a four-year-old and he's come to the show a few times. I haven't brought my daughter yet or my son but I think that I will over the Thanksgiving break when they come to visit.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, I mean, quite a story. Did the foot heal very well?

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Yeah, you know, I went back for my checkup and the ortho was like, this, you know, it seems to be healing. It probably was already healing by the time I saw you and put you in the boot anyway. And so it actually feels great. And I do have to give you a shout out because you let me borrow a laser from you for a month. And so while I was figuring out logistics of moving to New York and figuring out breastfeeding and all of that, I was also lasering my leg which I really do think helped. So yeah, appreciate that.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I've been doing it for my son. He asked for an E-bike and then broke all his bones. So he's been pretty laser heavy ever since then. But he's healing really well. So can't complain. Jenna, as always, you are quite interesting and I love how I can ask you anything and how real you are. And also you just describe things really well. And I can sort of almost feel like I'm in them. Like my cervix is torn and my ankle is broken.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: I wish neither one of those things on you.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Thank you, you're the best.

JENNA PASTUSZEK: Yeah, if you need someone to describe them when they do happen to you, let me know.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You are the best as always. Where can we find you online?

JENNA PASTUSZEK: You can find me at The Jenna P. The Jenna P. And there's always interesting stuff to check out there.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And one day in the not too distant future, you might even have some videos on Informed Pregnancy Plus which can be found at informedpregnancy.tv. Jenna, thanks again for joining me at home. Thanks for listening to the Informed Pregnancy podcast. For more parenting and pregnancy information just like this, visit us online at informedpregnancy.com.

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