



Pregnancy
Sickness
Support



HG Truths with Charlotte Howden

I live in Winchester with my husband and my 5-year-old son, and I am an HG Campaign and presenter and Producer of Sick – The Battle Against HG and Brushed Off Films

Why is raising awareness about HG important to you?

I wish I could say that it was to change the current treatment of women with Hyperemesis and in part it is a little to do with that, but the reality as we all know is that in this country (UK) changing the NHS and changing medical mindsets is not something that can be done overnight. So in the meantime raising awareness is to help women who are currently suffering not to feel like they are alone or isolated, to make them laugh when I can and educate them on this condition.

Tell us how your HG experience started

My symptoms began at 6-7 weeks pregnant, and I wish I could truly remember their onset but all I remember is a sudden and rapid decline from a normal functioning human being to an isolated, depressed and severely ill version of my former self. I was eventually diagnosed with severe Hyperemesis Gravidarum at around 12 weeks although it is very likely that my Doctors knew of this diagnosis before I did for weeks before.

The nausea, daily vomiting bouts and excessive saliva left me bedbound, severely depressed and unable to cope.

How did it impact your day-to-day life?

As my son is an only, I didn't have any other children to look after and I have tremendous compassion for those women who do. It just seems impossible to me to be able to have HG and children. Even without any, your life is turned upside down. My relationship with my husband for example, was non-existent but I think the hardest part was truly the lack of relationship with myself. I wasn't a person anymore. I couldn't work but was lucky enough to have empathetic employers at the time, who let me come back at my own pace, however the inability to do my job (something that made me happy) was just another huge unfair blow.

My daily life was simply nothing. A routine of nothing everyday other than being sick and miserable.

What was the hardest part?

The hardest part was trying to tolerate hell so that one day you could find incredible joy. How can you position those two things and rationalise the hell you were going through to get something that you had longed for that others could do without a single trip to hospital, no medication, and the ability to drink water! Termination not only crossed my mind but was a daily fantasy.

What do you wish people knew about HG?

I wish they could know the horror of it and understand that as a condition, whilst it includes vomiting and nausea, it is so far removed from pregnancy sickness that not only can they not be compared, the latter has to be completely dismissed from their mind and HG has to have it's own place, in isolation of anything you could imagine.

What did recovery look like for you?

Recovery from me came in the form of Ondansetron at around 20 weeks pregnant. After weeks of suffering those 3 pills a day saved my pregnancy, my sanity and my life. Whilst being medicated well isn't ideal there is nothing else really an HG sufferer can wish for, as it becomes too dangerous to listen to the "it will go at 16, 20, 30 weeks" comments from not just family and friends but the medical professionals. Post partum I have suffered with depression and anxiety, another legacy of HG that people need to understand more about.

What is your message for anyone else suffering?

You have to be selfish now. As women we find it hard to let other people do things for us, we find it hard to let go of control and planning and organising; but you have to. You also need to find yourself an advocate, someone who can do the research and speak to the charities and not take no for an answer. Remember how strong you are being surviving an illness that is debilitating and life changing. It doesn't matter how long you survive it for, and it doesn't make you a weak person if you can't tolerate the hell any longer, or your thoughts turn to things you never thought you would think. You are normal, thinking that way is normal. Hyperemesis is not.

Sick – The Battle Against HG is out now on Prime Video and Vimeo. Charlotte also presents the Hyperemesis Files Podcast which is available across all major podcast platforms.

She has also just started Brushed Off films a YouTube Channel and film company that talks about and explores life through women's eyes who have been "Brushed Off."

Links: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Sick-Battle-Against-Charlotte-Howden/dp/B08GL4FLR5>

<https://vimeo.com/ondemand/sick>

<https://hyperemesisfiles.buzzsprout.com/>

You can follow Charlotte on Instagram @the_sick_film and @brushedofffilms