



Pregnancy
Sickness
Support



HG Truths with Sarah Titmus

My name is Sarah Titmus and I live in Coventry. I am currently on maternity but when I return in June, I will be continuing my role as an Individual Learning Support worker to support learners with a range of learning and physical disabilities in a further education environment.

Why is raising awareness about HG important to you?

Raising awareness about HG is so important to me because I have had it twice and both times many professionals in my area did not understand the condition and had never heard of Pregnancy Sickness Support. My family and friends tried to understand but they did not know much about the condition. So my aim is to raise as much awareness about the condition and the charity within my local area and as far as possible.

Tell us how your HG experience started

During my first pregnancy I experienced symptoms from about 6 weeks, I was sick in the morning for about 2 weeks and then it progressed to morning and afternoon and then, morning, afternoon and evening. Until it became pretty much 24 hours a day, this lasted around 16 weeks and I was admitted into hospital 2 or 3 times for rehydration drips and sadly had to be admitted due to potassium salt complications. I also had severe constipation and hypersalivation.

During my second pregnancy I experienced symptoms from around 7 weeks until around 20 weeks but it did not start slow and progress like my first. It started bad right from the start, it hit me hard. The constant vomiting, nausea, hypersalivation and constipation. I was admitted into hospital for 1 fluid drip towards the beginning but then unfortunately due to lack of understanding and the coronavirus I was left without any proper care until I was around 19 weeks and I was admitted into intensive care and nearly lost my life, this was because I developed Hypokalaemia which is a severe potassium salt complication and my liver was not functioning correctly.

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

Sadly both times, the response from my healthcare professionals was not great. I was often told to just keep trying different medications, without acknowledging actually how severe my sickness was. My ketones were checked but were often fine, so I was sent home without any care. I would often be told it would get better and that I would be fine and even when I mentioned symptoms I was having, they were never mentioned in connection with HG. Not many professionals in my local area seemed to understand the constitution and were sadly going by the book regards my care. As mentioned before, they would check my urine and if that was ok, they assumed that I must be ok.

Did it affect your relationship?

In terms of how it affected my relationship, thankfully my partner was really supportive during both pregnancies. We grew distant, as I was often just in my bedroom, most days I couldn't get out of bed, despite the distance, we stayed strong as a couple and he really did help me to make it through. During my second pregnancy I couldn't look after my first born, she was four at the time and my partner took on the role of mummy and daddy as I couldn't get out of bed. I felt incredibly guilty as my four-year-old learnt that she must leave mummy to rest, some days I couldn't even lift my head of my pillow to talk to her.

I wasn't able to take care of my basic needs, I would go into the bathroom to be sick and then back to bed. I could not eat and I could not drink. I was struggling to sleep. There were no days or nights, I was just existing. I did not brush my hair or teeth for a long time. My partner would help me to wash but I would take all of what little energy I had to get into the bath for him to clean me. I did not get dressed and I did not leave the house other than to attend hospital or appointments.

What was the hardest part?

The hardest part for me out of both of the pregnancies was definitely being in hospital during the pandemic. I was admitted for 6 days and I could not have any visitors. I was told by one doctor that I needed intensive care to monitor my heart as there were concerns that I may not wake up the next morning. I had to ring my partner and speak to my little girl, not knowing if that was the last time I would hear her voice.

What do you wish people knew about HG?

I wish that people knew how much it can really affect someone mentally and impact their everyday lives. I wish that people understood the differences between normal pregnancy sickness and HG. I also wish that people knew how much it can impact a person's mental health. I had thought of suicide and abortion during birth of my pregnancies.

What did recovery look like for you?

In terms of recovery, once I had given birth, everything disappeared and I felt like me again. I was able to eat and drink and I had a lot more energy. Sadly medication did not work for me, I tried lots and it would work for a little while but then it would return. I was not given any proper care or medication until 10+ weeks into both of my pregnancies. My pregnancy symptoms lasted for the duration of my whole pregnancy.

What is your message for anyone else suffering?

'You are amazing and you can and will get through this. I know it is so hard and some days you want to give up, but don't. Push through this and it does eventually end. Do not feel guilty about resting, rest is important, rest as much as you can. Do not take no for an answer when it comes to medical professionals and your care, push for support and medications! There is light at the end of the tunnel and you will soon have your baby/babies in your arms. You will eventually get your life back and feel normal again. You are stronger than you know and you are incredible. You are not alone and you are not crazy, this condition isn't normal sickness, this is an awful condition and how bad you feel some days is completely justifiable, just do not give up. YOU CAN DO THIS.'

Sarah has written a book alongside another author, who also experienced HG during her pregnancy, and she also volunteers for Pregnancy Sickness Support. They wanted to give other ladies the chance to get their stories read and raise as much awareness about the condition as possible. The book is a great tool for current HG sufferers and previous HG sufferers. You can get the book here:

https://www.amazon.co.uk/How-Survived-Hyperemesis-Gravidarum-collection/dp/B093B4528K/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=how+i+survived+hyperemesis+gravidarum&qid=1620759030&s=books&sr=1-1

Sarah also shared some of her experiences to encourage ladies to take part in the NOURISH study, here is an article from Sarah's local paper, discussing the study and parts of her experiences.

<https://coventryobserver.co.uk/news/coventry-mum-who-nearly-died-from-pregnancy-sickness-urges-other-mothers-to-take-part-in-hg-study/>

Here is a photo of Sarah with her two beautiful HG heroes, Lihanna-Marie, who is 5 and Layla-Mya who is 7 months old.

