

Don't offer me a ginger biscuit and call it a cure...

Do you know what it's like to vomit so hard you wet yourself a bit? Do you know what it's like to wish for an end to feeling of despair, when it feels like there's no way out but you have to keep fighting because you couldn't live with yourself if you chose the alternative?

When I think back to before I got pregnant, my expectations could not be further from my reality. I expected to feel amazing, I'm carrying new life, I'm a freaking superhero. Did I feel like one? Heck no.

My first pregnancy, I expected cute maternity wear and a beautiful glow, what I got? 42 weeks' worth of sickness, SPD and a 4th degree tear after 35 hours active labour.

People expect you to get sick in pregnancy, when I was running to the loo at work to throw up, it was a reminder of my beautiful baby and for the most part, i got on with it. Not one person, medical professionals or otherwise thought it was abnormal they just told me, 'it'll end at 12 weeks, it'll end at 20 weeks, oh you're still sick? That's bad luck'

I had a lovely big bump and loved every second of having a new born when he finally arrived. I didn't doubt for a second that I'd want another child. Even after all I'd been through, how bad could it be? I survived just fine, I knew I'd need a c-section, I knew I'd probably be sick for a lot of it but hey I coped before, I still ate and had cravings with my first born, I could do it again.

So when hubby said, let's have number two now, my first was about to turn 2 and I thought, yeah why not? I was broody anyway and when we got those 2 lines I mentally prepared myself for a pregnancy similar to my sons. How bad could it be?

I fell pregnant just in time for our wedding, I started vomiting around 4.5 weeks but just 'normal morning sickness'. By the time the wedding came round I was 8 weeks, by some miracle I didn't puke that day but by the middle of June, I was vomiting between 5 and 15 times a day. I went to my GP who thankfully did not dismiss my condition- I was then subject to a fortnightly check on my ketones and how dehydrated I was, several types of anti-emetics and plenty of unwelcome advice from people who knew nothing of my diagnosis.

Hyperemesis Gravidarum- sounds like a Harry Potter spell, if it is Harry Potter would use it only on 'he who should not be named'. What kind of fresh hell had Mother Nature unleashed on me? And more importantly why did people think telling me to have a ginger biscuit was going to help? So as a woman who has survived this- please don't offer a suffering mother-to-be a ginger biscuit. Its soul destroying and it will not work.

What I can tell you is I spent approximately 17 weeks, unashamedly vomiting wherever I needed too, my mouth was so full of saliva (a common side effect) i couldn't swallow that without gagging or you guessed it, vomiting. I survived solely on ice pops, the odd sausage roll and my wonderful mum watching my toddler and letting me sleep. I couldn't look after myself let alone him. All that whilst worrying if my baby was getting enough and growing enough, worrying about him and I hate to type this part because I love him so damn much my heart hurts, but I resented the little thing inside me, for robbing me of the energy to look after the baby I already had, I spent days sobbing wondering if it would end, but that just made me sick as well. It became a bit of joke that I could smell my mums washing powder on her clothes...I was like a blood hound...the smell made me feel so sick. I couldn't go out in my

car...I could barely even shower some days. Water smells I tell you, everything smells. I remember going to my 20 week scan and praying my baby was a normal size. I don't really remember much else other than crying with relief that I'd 'done enough' so far to keep him going.

Despite all of this do you know what the worst part is? Not the vomiting, not the nausea but the lack of understanding. Friends, even some family and co-workers- they all seem to think you're a bit of a diva that can't handle pregnancy. They tell you that you need to eat and stop being ridiculous and then if you do manage to eat something they judge what you are eating. 'You need to eat more than just a piece of toast'. You then have the women that tell you how sick they were in their pregnancies like it's some sort of competition to get a part in the exorcist when actually they've been sick 3 times in 12 weeks and carried on their normal day to day lives. I'm not belittling anyone's pain but please do not kid yourself that hyperemesis is the same as morning sickness.

My hyperemesis journey came to an end at 37 weeks, my beautiful against all odds baby was born on Christmas day 2016 and the nausea faded and we bonded instantly. I had threatened pre term labor twice before my body finally caved and went into labour itself (still got my planned section thank God!) I firmly believe my body was just giving up, it didn't have enough to sustain a baby anymore and my little monkey hadn't grown between scans within a week.

I am glad he's here safely and I would do it all again for either of my sons but would I do it again for a third baby that I don't yet know? No.

Hyperemesis has robbed me of the desire to have anymore. I can't put myself or my family through it again. I am blessed with my boys.

Mothers who are suffering- you can do it, there is help and support available. Pregnancy sickness support UK are incredible. Don't ever be ashamed of how you feel, when you want to give up, when the little voice in your head takes over and tells you to end the pain, don't ignore it, speak to the people around you, talk about how you are feeling and advocate for yourself. Find a doctor who will support you through this, remove those from your life who aren't trying to understand (even just temporarily) and know that it's okay not to shower for days, weeks, (months even) if you don't have the strength.

People who know a mother suffering- don't offer her a fricking ginger biscuit. You wouldn't offer a heart attack victim a rennie.