

I was one of the lucky ones...

I'm six weeks pregnant with my second child and low and behold the sickness begins. I always thought the sickness was bad with my first pregnancy, little did I know about how bad this was going to get!

In my first pregnancy, the sickness and nausea began around 8 weeks, I felt really rough, and was sick pretty much every day until I went into labour, well actually I was still vomiting whilst I was having contractions. Generally, I would say I was being sick about 4/5 times a day but I could still get on with general day to day life, I still went to work, I still ventured out of the house and did usual things, I just felt and looked terrible.

Pregnancy number two, the final pregnancy!! It seemed to be hard from day one, with cysts on my ovaries that burst causing lots of pain and distress thinking something was seriously wrong from around 5 weeks. The doctors quickly identified the problem and that was that. Around week 6 the nausea began along with vomiting, and got progressively worse. By week 12 I was exhausted the vomiting was now around 15 times a day, I was drained, by now I had tried every form of ginger you could think of (crystallised ginger worked wonders in my first pregnancy, but not this time). I tried fizzy pop, flat coke, herbal remedies, rubbing dill into my chest, rich tea biscuits nothing took this away.

By week 18 I was struggling, I'd not really been in work properly since being 12 weeks, I would go into the office for 8.30 and generally by 9.30 I was on my way back home as the entire office had listened to me puking for the past hour! Not pleasant for me or them! I spoke with the midwife many of times who told me it wasn't hyperemesis as I had no ketones in my urine. I visited the doctor who then signed me on the sick for 2 weeks and ordered bed rest. I thought this would do it and I could get back to normality.

I remember very clearly at week 21 things seemed to go from bad to worse. The sickness was worse than ever, I could spend up to an hour at a time in the bathroom hugging the toilet seat repeatedly being sick. I was so sick I constantly had sick in my hair, but I was too weak to shower and I couldn't stand the smell of soap. I couldn't put a toothbrush in my mouth and I always peed myself with the constant pressure on my bladder from the sickness. It was the pits.

I had now got to a point where light would make me sick, daylight, light from the TV or my phone, so most of the time I lay in darkness, literally, on my own. I had become cut off from the world. My daughter who was 3 at the time would come into the bathroom and rub my back and say 'poor mummy' whilst my husband would have to work a full day being out of the house for 12 hours, come home to cook his own tea and look after our daughter, as I was unable to do anything. I felt so alone and guilty for not being able to take care of my family.

Week 23, I'd had enough. I couldn't deal with this anymore, I wanted it to end. I remember curled up in a ball on the cold tiled bathroom floor, crying hysterically, begging and pleading for someone to make this stop, for it all to go away. I was being sick up to 30 times a day by now. The constant smell of sick and urine as I was covered in it all the time, was awful!

This continued until week 30 I felt like I'd been locked away for an eternity, in the dark, on my own. This has a serious effect on you mentally, thinking that something must be wrong, that my baby would come out and either not live or have serious deformities. By now I'd been given omeprazole, ranitidine, cyclizine, prochlorperazine, I'd had them in various forms and doubled them up, tablet

form, liquid form, tablets to dissolve under my lip. Nothing worked. I'd had spiritual healing and Bowen treatment.

I regularly went to hospital and I was under consultant care, I was always told it would stop with time. I still had no ketones in my urine so they didn't know what to do with me, and just sent me home, every time. By now I'd lost half a stone in weight. I was managing to sip bits of water which I'm sure helped – the midwife told me I was 'one of the lucky ones' as I didn't need IV fluids.

Week 30...I was in the hospital for my consultant appointment, vomiting in the waiting room whilst blooming mothers-to-be watched in horror. I was taken into the consulting room where a midwife who must have been in her 50's, so clearly experienced, told me I should be eating ginger biscuits. If I wasn't being as sick as I was I could have quite easily poked her eyes out! The amount of times I heard this!! She then proceeded to say, in the most patronising of tones 'It is MY job to teach women like YOU how to look after yourself!' I was horrified!! Throughout the whole pregnancy with such little understanding by medical professionals I was constantly made to feel like I was being mard, like I couldn't deal with 'a bit of morning sickness' as people often referred to it.

I begged the consultant to give me something stronger. By now I had made contact with PSS who were absolutely wonderful and truly gave me a life line as I thought I was totally alone out there, as no one understood. PSS told me to ask for Ondansatron, which I did. He told me it was at my own risk as it hasn't been trialled enough to say it is safe. By this point I needed it. I took the ondansetron and 24 hours later I was feeling better, 3 days later the sickness has subsided, it was now around 5 times a day, which in comparison was amazing! The nausea never really left me. For the next 5 weeks it was so much better, still vomiting but nothing like week 21-30 which were definitely the darkest times of my life. Or so I thought....

My second daughter was born by caesarean due to 3rd degree tears with my first and she was then breech. My bladder and brain stopped talking to each other and after the section I was unable to empty my bladder myself for 72 hours – this was distressing.

For the first 3 months I thought I was fine, I thought the whole thing was behind me. I was seriously depressed. I was diagnosed with and referred for counselling, I struggled being around people, I was unbelievably negative about everything, I pushed people away, I couldn't bear to look at myself in the mirror because I repulsed myself, I didn't wear make-up or brush my hair for weeks. The aftermath of the pregnancy was kicking in! My marriage seemed to be in tatters, my husband had become used to being alone and being without me, we'd grown so far apart – he just didn't understand me, which was so hard for him too. I once again, felt desperately lonely, sad, irritable, ugly, my confidence was on the floor – and I am a very confident person, I'm a sales girl! This went on for around 6 months, so my baby was 9 months old by this point. It was hard and sad.

Now, I could never be pregnant again, I couldn't do that to myself nor my family. I have since left my employment of 15 years and set up my own business. Although life is by far better now, I will never forget the horrors of HG and severe pregnancy sickness and how it can destroy your life for a time. PSS were simply amazing I couldn't have ever gotten through that pregnancy without their constant support and understanding. You are a truly amazing charity and this is something that will always lie close in my heart.