

When we found out I was pregnant we'd never heard of Hyperemesis apart from the Duchess of Cambridge suffering with it. Since suffering myself I've found so many people are unaware of the illness and its implications. I had plenty of desperate moments, where, without my husband it would have been much harder, thanks to Pregnancy Sickness Support it also made the most horrendous time a tiny bit more bearable. I told myself when I managed to get back out and about I shouldn't play down how horrendous this illness is, yet I find myself struggling to explain the enormity of the challenge it presents on a daily basis. Sadly women still end pregnancies because of this awful illness, in third world countries it can still be a killer to mother and baby. This is a brief account of trying to sum up my first trimester, it's not been easy to write and I actually find it tricky to talk about as it brings back the nausea and some very desperate feelings.

We found out I was pregnant I had about 10 days at the start without nausea. When it began I assumed it was normal morning sickness, I went to the supermarket stocked up on everything they tell you to, ginger biscuits, crackers and sports drinks. My job is pretty full on with lots of travel and quite public being in front of the camera. I'm a reporter and presenter for Sky Sports. I carried on working, driving to matches and standing on the gantry feeling ill. Reporting live to camera or presenting in the studio feeling truly awful, still thinking this was normal pregnancy sickness. Of course being so early no one knew what was going on. Then one day it got so bad I had to call in sick to cover a match which I'd never done. Coincidentally my colleague I spoke to also suffered with Hyperemesis in her first pregnancy, she fully understood and a few weeks later I messaged her and we formed a close bond as she was pregnant too and suffering badly. It was actually a big comfort not to be going through it alone and have someone who understood when medical professionals didn't seem to take me seriously. It was at this point I found PSS, I explained the situation and straight away I had a WhatsApp buddy to talk to. Someone who'd been through it and completely got every thing talked about, from not being able to drink to trying to find a solution. When many people dismiss it as morning sickness it meant so much to explain my symptoms and get advice on what I should do.

I was already on a drug called stemetil after talking to the GP but it was having no impact. After calling in sick, later that day as the sickness got worse we went to an out of hours doctor. I was being sick every 20 minutes and he prescribed another anti nausea tablet, typically the late night pharmacy didn't have it. I remember being sat on the freezing cold pavement being sick in the street, I must have looked such a state. My husband went round in circles with 111 and the doctors before eventually getting an alternative medication. I managed to get to bed and have some rest but that was the start of the worst months I've known. From there we went back to the doctors in the daytime who gave me an antihistamine, it did nothing except knock me out for a few hours. Soon enough my husband was on the phone to 111 again trying to get help. The sickness was so intense every few minutes I was begging him for help. We went round in circles before finally managing to get into an early pregnancy unit. We had their details from an early scan we'd had due to some bleeding and between them and 111 they accepted they would assess me.

I was being sick non-stop and had no idea how I'd make it to the hospital, this was the point I realised it wasn't normal. I could barely put on my trainers, it was a monumental effort to get dressed and struggle down the stairs when every movement made me want to be sick, my husband carried me to the car. I remember Barney our dog just looking at me with his big brown eyes confused about what was going on as I sat on the stairs being ill.

The journey was hell, on the M5 we had the windows open as I carried on being sick. My husband didn't flinch and somehow got me through the hospital door, I could barely walk by now. At the hospital they took various readings and advised us not to ever let it get that bad again, although we'd been seeking help for two days! It was difficult and painful to take bloods and get a cannula in

because I was so dehydrated. Add my fear of needles and being sick and it was a complete nightmare. My husband was told he had to leave at this point, it was [2am](#) and I was moved onto a ward, I felt so guilty waking people up being sick. The drip helped massively, and the doctors advised the next day the sickness would probably last a few weeks. The ward was boiling and uncomfortable and they monitored my ketones in my urine to see if I was ready to go home. Frustratingly these aren't really an indicator of dehydration, I learned this from PSS. Most hospitals have a policy if you don't have them they won't re-hydrate you even if you're showing other signs of dehydration. I needed more fluids but as the staff were so overrun they didn't hook me up to another drip until much later on, even then it was only because I still had ketones. They moved me onto a drug called ondasteron along with cyclizine, we had to wait 3 hours to be discharged and then return the next day to collect the pills.

I managed 10 days at home before being readmitted. I was still being sick but managing the very odd snack of crackers or crisps, maybe a fruit pastille to suck on and on occasional days managing to get downstairs to the sofa, we were so fortunate my husband works from home and was able to come to my aid every time I was sick. I'm not sure how I would have coped without him there. Again when I deteriorated it was a massive battle to be taken seriously. My husband went round in circles with 111 who wanted me to travel miles away to a doctors just to collect some forms, luckily we managed to go directly to the hospital early pregnancy unit after the doctor phoned them. This time we waited two hours as I tried to lay across some wooden chairs. They struggled to get a drip in again due to the dehydration and I was placed on a ward. The smell in the room was overwhelming, I asked the nurse to check if the patient next to me had left food out. Food is a massive trigger when you feel so sick, she was dismissive and said there was nothing there. I felt silly and like I shouldn't be there. The next morning I could see a half eaten chicken sandwich wilting in the heat of the ward, the smell was turning me. They gave me fluids through the day and in the evening when I thought I was going home I was told I had to stay in. The reasons were the doctor said I'd reported I still felt sick- of course I did! I felt sick the whole time, and the doctor didn't even see me! The constant battle with medical professionals made me feel like no one was believing how atrocious I felt. They wouldn't give me any more fluids so I was forced to lay in the sweaty ward another night feeling awful, it was horrendous. My husband collected me the next day and I left feeling terrible, I got home and began being sick again.

At this point I was just praying to somehow get to 12 weeks as many people advised this is when it should improve. Every day I lay there, I dreaded my phone buzzing as I didn't have the strength to respond. I ignored calls from my family and friends and my husband had to talk to my parents and sister as I simply couldn't, it made me sick. Our dog and cat lay either side of me literally watching over me, they were such a comfort in the worst of times. My husband was there whisking away sick bags and buckets as most of the time I couldn't get out of bed. I didn't want to stop his life, but when he had to go out even to the shops left me anxious and even lonelier. No one knew what was happening as no one knew I was pregnant, we still didn't want to say anything until 12 weeks. People were starting to ask where I was as my job is quite obvious. Having never been off sick I had been missing from coverage for weeks and was missing the end of the season. I tried to watch a bit on my phone and read where I could. My colleague whom I record a podcast with was amazingly understanding as I just couldn't keep up my usual commitments. There was no way I could get out to games or down to London to present, being freelance this just added to the anxiety. Work were understanding but being freelance there was no sick pay for me and the days turned to weeks, in the end the weeks were three whole months. Without exaggeration all I did every single day was lay as still as possible in bed, if I showered I was sick, if I turned my head to check my phone it could make me sick. My WhatsApp buddy was so incredible, she told me what an amazing achievement it was if I managed a quick shower or to get down to the sofa. You may think that sounds absurd but it took me hours to psyche myself up to even do either of those. I couldn't go near the kitchen as the smell

would turn me. All doors had to be closed and windows open. When I heard my husband walking around the house that even made me feel sick. We got to the point where he couldn't cook in the house, our amazing neighbours knew the situation and kindly let him cook in their kitchen- it sounds ridiculous but it's true. The smell of the oven would make me be sick, the smell of the washing made me sick, if Barney our dog was wet from the rain it would make me sick. If Poppy our cat walked across me it made me feel even worse. We tried so many different drinks, but after I'd brought them back up I couldn't face them again. The smallest sip could make me sick and obviously at this point I was barely eating a thing. The nausea was overwhelming and utterly debilitating, I was probably drinking an inch of water a day at this stage.

One thing I wasn't aware of was the awful stomach ache ondasteron can cause. Without being too graphic and maintaining some dignity (although most of the time I felt I had none!)- it blocks you up. I've had my appendix removed and the pain was just as searing and stabbing. It was marginally preferable to the nausea but the medication hadn't stopped that either! Cyclizine also has side effects, it can make you extremely fatigued but this was more manageable as all I was doing was laying as still as possible anyway! I was also prescribed thiamine which is a B vitamin, but the strong smell of it made me be sick and in the end I stopped taking it. I had searing heartburn even though I barely ate a thing, the pills for that were too big to swallow and a kind GP prescribed me gaviscon advanced which helped slightly.

Having not left the house for weeks I felt incredibly isolated, however I couldn't face seeing anyone either. I was a prisoner in my own home. It was hard to explain to best friends and family who were concerned, but all I could do was get through each hour then each day. My husband would appear when it was time to take my pills, I absolutely dreaded it as quite often they came straight back up. I had to wake up at night to take them and quite often the action would make me sick, it was so hard to get them down. I didn't take a pregnancy vitamin because I couldn't, I was lucky if the folic acid stayed down which made me feel guilty for the possible effects on my baby.

We rang the doctors after I had been home being so sick again after my second hospital admission and spoke to a really helpful GP, we'd had such problems but this one got us into a different hospital where they have a nurse who specialises in Hyperemesis. Upon arrival they put me in a bed by a window and I spoke to that nurse who truly understood. I can't tell you how vital that fresh air is when you feel so awful. You wouldn't believe the amount of times I was told to eat ginger by medical professionals, obviously that was not working! They hooked me up to another drip and administered anti sickness drugs. I had to stay over but it was a much more positive experience. Not all the nurses fully understood but I felt like I wasn't a burden being there. I was at the end of my first trimester and praying somehow to make my scan the following Monday. I remember looking at the date on the wall as 11th May and feeling so sad to be missing my Mum's 60th birthday. I was missing out on everyday life stuck in bed every day feeling so nauseous, I went home on the Saturday and was still being sick but the fluids had hydrated me up at least.

We managed to get me to the 12 week scan and in the waiting room were numerous messages saying you must drink water. I looked around at the glowing pregnant women feeling like I was failing somehow. I worriedly told the sonographer I'd had nothing to drink but luckily it was not an issue. It was such a boost to see little one, I'd been off work for weeks and could finally say why. We'd never planned on making an announcement on social media, we are so aware how hard it can be to have children being close to people who've had many problems. I wanted to treat this sensitively as I know it can hurt, here was me complaining about the sickness while also being lucky enough to be pregnant. Now I realise I shouldn't feel guilty for complaining and in fact it's vital to speak out as there is a lack of information on HG. I vowed in those moments of lying in bed I would

not play down how awful this illness is.

When trying to describe it to friends and colleagues I often say remember your worst hangover, imagine that all day all night all the time. So many people have been understanding but I also know some people have said it was just normal pregnancy sickness. It's not- just 1% of pregnant women suffer this way and it's a battle to be taken seriously. I understand this because I too had never heard of it, and maybe would have just thought it was normal to be sick in pregnancy. I'd have also thought why is a charity needed? It's not a terminal illness or life threatening... but actually it can be the latter. I heard in hospital of women so sadly feeling no other choice but to terminate as the sickness was so crippling. People joke to us that we will only have one child after this experience but actually that is the reality for many HG sufferers, they cannot put their body through it again because sadly the likelihood is very high you will suffer once more if you fall pregnant again. I also don't understand the stigma of having one child. To even have one is an amazing blessing. This whole experience had taught me not to cast judgement so easily.

All was looking OK at the dating scan despite me losing over a stone, little one was somehow taking all it needed. That day was actually wonderful, although the sickness returned that evening. At times I'd been wondering if I could do this, seeing the scan made it real and helped me start to develop a bond with our baby. It had been an incredibly lonely time, I'd gone from someone who worked in a job they love every day to not leaving the house or seeing anyone. Previously I'd have enjoyed a chilled day at home off from a hectic work schedule but now I was sick of the sight our bedroom and living room walls accompanied by the constant nausea. I rarely went down to the sofa due the movement making me sick, and climbing back up the stairs was like climbing Everest. I hadn't walked our dog since the start of March or seen friends for weeks and weeks. All I could do was focus the tiny amount of energy I had on simply existing.

I'd been pinning a lot of hope on the sickness [ending at 12](#) weeks, it didn't at all but the next trimester has been different which I will explain in my next piece. We had to cancel our holiday and the sickness continued but people suddenly knew the situation and I had love and support that began to make me feel less isolated. You learn a lot about people's true colours when you depend on kindness, and it is something I will come onto more.

If you're going through this right now you are an amazing person, my PSS buddy couldn't tell me this enough and although at the time I didn't really get it now I understand she was right. Anyone who gets through a day with this terrible illness is a fighter, I hope we can raise more awareness of the severity and impact it has.