

My HG Experience – Emma Gallantree



This is my beautiful daughter Ava.

As most people know, she is my absolute world! I'd move heaven and earth for her as long as she was happy. So it's pretty hard to imagine a time where I despised her existence. But there was!

In October 2008 we found out we were expecting a baby! Great news right? No, not for me. What should have been one of the happiest times of my life, ended up being one of the worst! 9 months of sheer hell!

I am one of the unfortunate 1-2% of women who suffers from a condition called Hyperemesis Gravidarum (HG). I was sick more than 30 times a day, each day, for 41 weeks. I couldn't keep food or water down at all. I lost 3 and a half stone in weight by 38 weeks pregnant. I was hospitalised more than 10 times. My liver and kidneys were struggling to function at only 10 weeks due to the severe dehydration my body was going through. I was bedridden for the first 4 months. Smells, stress, movement and even lights triggered horrendous sickness episodes. I was signed off work for my entire pregnancy. Even something as simple as brushing my hair or showering made me feel like i was actually dying. Genuinely! Even the doctors referred to her as a parasite! I was so ill but all the while she was thriving! Taking every tiny bit of nourishment and leaving me with nothing. I was terrified that at the end of my pregnancy, I wouldn't even bond with this baby I was fighting so hard to bring into the world. I felt nothing but resentment towards her, how could I possibly feel that sudden rush of emotion for a child who was putting me through all this?

But the crazy thing is that as soon as i laid eyes on her, I fell madly in love ♥ And no sooner had she made her grand entrance into this world, I could eat and drink and instantly the sickness was gone!

But then years later and I do mean years, I was diagnosed with PTSD from my pregnancy! Sounds silly doesn't it? It's ok, you can say. I thought it was silly too, guess that's why it took me years to see anyone about it. PTSD is something that only people who have suffered a really traumatic experience would go through. But HG had affected me in ways i didn't even realise. And what I went through WAS was a traumatic experience.

So one thing that really frustrates me is when ppl make flippant comments about HG being just morning sickness. No, it's not, it's debilitating all day and all night extreme sickness! Ginger, crackers, flat coke, peppermint and any other good old fashioned tips that ppl give you, will NOT work. Please keep these gems of advice to yourself. We are not exaggerating our symptoms. We are not being lazy or selfish. We are not pretending. Imagine the worst hangover you have ever

had, then imagine having that for an entire 9 months! And you're somewhere close to how HG feels.

A concoction of drugs which gp's are reluctant to prescribe will only help to ease symptoms, not even get rid, just slightly take the edge off. I was on a mixture of 4 different anti sickness and anti-acid prescriptions that had to be taken 3-4 times a day, and God help if I ever missed a dose cos I sure as hell knew about it. One of the anti-sickness tablets I was on is typically given to cancer patients enduring chemo! Plus all the iv drips and the anti sickness injections which I lost count of after about 30.

HG is a condition that, if I'm 100% honest, you probably won't even know about unless you've seen someone suffer or been through it yourself. I'm here to educate those of you that are still in the dark about the actual trauma of HG. Not just on yourself but also the people around you.

Ava is an only child for a reason and not because I wouldn't love to give her a sibling but because giving my daughter a brother or a sister, is actually one of THE hardest decisions that someone like me who suffers with HG is ever likely to make and that breaks my heart daily.

Sadly, given that it is hereditary, the chances of Ava going through the exact same thing when she is older and trying for her own family, is exceptionally high. I pray she never has to endure HG but for now, all I can do is raise awareness and hope that by then, there are better provisions and knowledge to help women deal with this condition and enjoy their pregnancies ❤️