

Natalie's Experience

The first time I experienced sickness in pregnancy, was very early on, around 5 or 6 weeks pregnant and I like many other survivors, thought it was a good sign and was quite excited by having such a well-known symptom of pregnancy. I was just starting a new job and had no idea how hard the next few weeks would be. I was constantly feeling extremely nauseous and as soon as I woke up I had to run to the loo to vomit. There was no way to stop it, it was coming out whether I wanted to or not! I would then get in my car feeling terribly sick, luckily and rather oddly I never was sick in my car, nor in a public place, which I am so grateful for. I then got the park and ride bus so had another journey to battle through but this time with lots of people who may see me vomit. I sat on the bus nibbling a banana, chewing gum or a biscuit while people looked at me probably thinking I was hungover. My HG made me feel ravenous yet sick, it was a complete contradiction and left me spending loads on food as I'd have cravings and stock up on lots of food then get to work and sit nibbling constantly, yet I looked so thin, my clothes were hanging off me. I was again lucky that I wasn't sick too many times at work and no one actually ever heard me but I would panic that someone would hear me and no matter how hard I fought it, I would have to run to the loo.

Gradually the frequency of my sickness increased and I would be sick two or three times before I left for work and it would start at 5am rather than when I woke up. The sickness was now projectile so I would run to the loo but often it would end up on the floor or wall. I would get home and rush straight to the loo, then after dinner I would sit there praying for some to stay down but it wouldn't. I was so miserable and I should have been so happy, I felt guilty for feeling fed up about being sick. So many times I thought to myself I can't do this, I can't go to work I feel too weak and ill, I'll have to give up.

I knew something wasn't right and went to the doctor after doing some research and coming across the pregnancy sickness support charity website. I knew that there were anti-emetics that I could be prescribed. My doctor was unfortunately not supportive at all and told me I just had morning sickness and everyone got it. I explained how often I was being sick and how ill I felt but she took my blood pressure and said I was fine. She did however prescribe me cyclizine and sent me on my way.

The cyclizine took the edge of the nausea for a day and I felt such relief but after a few days at about 10 weeks pregnant, things took a turn for the worse and one day I couldn't stop being sick, it was every half hour and by 11am I'd been sick about 9 times. I felt very low and scared. I had been texting a few friends that had babies and they expressed their concerns and said it wasn't normal sickness and I needed to see a doctor. I also visited the pregnancy sickness support website again and was waiting for a call back from a doctor. In the meantime I phoned my doctor's surgery and they organised for a call back. It was a different doctor to the one I'd seen and he immediately knew I was quite ill and said I needed to go to A+E now and he would refer me as he was concerned about dehydration. I am so grateful to him, he was the first person that really understood what I had been battling. I was kept in for three days as I had 3+ ketones in my urine and a urine infection. I was so relieved to be given some anti-emetics straight into my blood stream which immediately stopped the sickness. It sounds strange but I felt safe in hospital, I was well looked after but the midwives only wrote in my notes about HG and didn't explain it to me.

I was sent on my way with cyclizine, feeling human again. I thought that perhaps I was 'cured' and the cyclizine would work this time. No one explained to me that this was an ongoing illness and I could be suffering the whole pregnancy. I ended up back in hospital just 10 days later after a very bad day and night of constant sickness, keeping no fluids or food down. Me and my now husband tried everything from jelly to plain potato but nothing would stay down. Back into hospital I went,

this time I had a gynecologist go through a two page questionnaire with me asking if I was sure I didn't have twins (I had a scan at 10 weeks as they were concerned and there was definitely just one baby!). This time they rehydrated me over the course of a day and I was sent home with ondansetron which was my saviour! I was still sick but not in the frequency that I had been experiencing. I did start to suffer bad headaches though and one day I had the most terrible migraine and I was so violently sick that it took my breath away and I felt extremely panicky. I don't think I'll ever forget that awful moment.

I had one more admission to hospital after I naively thought that I no longer needed ondansetron at 16 weeks pregnant and I ran out of them over a bank holiday weekend. I had to argue with another doctor in an out of hours clinic about how ill I was. I did my urine sample and she quickly apologised and sent me straight to hospital. Two days later and I was out, but not after they tried to send me home with metoclopramide. I had to argue my point again that ondansetron really helped me and I didn't want to risk trying something else at this point.

I was sick now and then after this point but things were much better and as long as I took my medication I felt ok and I somehow managed to hold my job down until my maternity leave started. I was only ever prescribed a month's supply of ondansetron at a time so I had to beg the doctor each time for another prescription. Toward the end I found a very sympathetic and understanding doctor who never once said 'but you shouldn't feel sick at this point' or 'have you tried peppermint or ginger sweets'.

I never did call the doctor back from the pregnancy sickness support charity as I was admitted to hospital but it was just nice to know they were there to support me. Everything I read on the website just made me feel less alone. I also downloaded Caitlin Dean's book on my Kindle and read it at a particularly low point, bed ridden but feeling like at least someone understood the terrible time I was going through.

I'm so proud to be a volunteer for the charity that got me through some dark times. I was scared and didn't know what I was going through had a name and it wasn't my fault.

I had a healthy baby girl Layla, weighing 7lbs 13oz on Halloween 2015. I am petrified of becoming pregnant again but at least I know I have the support of the PSS charity and I would plan my pregnancy with medication in mind if I did decide to have another.