

My Story

My son is 15 months old now and I still feel the experience hangs over me. I had two boys before this pregnancy and had what I would class as “normal” morning sickness with my first two pregnancies. With my “normal sickness” I was still sick, but I found it to be more predictable sickness. I also found I could ease the sickness (not stop it necessarily) and most importantly for me – I still managed to get to work. That sickness ended both times by 12 weeks.

I had only ever heard of Hyperemesis Gravidarum (HG) vaguely. I had no direct understanding of it. With my third pregnancy it was different from the very beginning. My experience of HG was not just of sickness. My first symptom was when I would have been only 3 weeks pregnant and I felt off colour, giddy and weak. I kept having to sit down as I felt faint. Within a couple of days this progressed to exhaustion and all day long light headedness. The actual sickness kicked in at week 5. I was half prepared for this as in my other two pregnancies it kicked in at week 6 and was still severe enough to be unable to hide the fact I was pregnant to the outside world, however, by week 6 in my HG pregnancy I was beyond sick I felt so ill I couldn't leave my bed. I felt so weak and even moving my head from one side to the other was enough motion to set me off. I could not even keep a drink down and I had no less than four water infections during this pregnancy.

There was a point that I believed I was dying. This will sound so dramatic to some but I was so tired, so sick, the medications weren't working very well as I couldn't keep them in my stomach, I couldn't eat and I could barely make the trip to my en-suite. I had incredibly painful headaches to boot.

One day all I did was focus on breathing and my partner offered to ring an ambulance. I felt a fraud and told him not to waste a resource as I was “**Just pregnant**” which is something you hear a lot. I think the most difficult part of it for me was how visual motion would trigger it. My middle son who was 9 at the time basically lost his Mum for a good 8 months. I can hand on my heart say I retired to my bed for 8 months. I felt an utter failure as I could not go anywhere or do anything. One day I attempted to take my son to the cinema. I do not even remember the film we watched I just remember puking in the ODEON toilets and leaving my son in the cinema alone. I had to get a lift there and back and we only live 2 miles from the cinema. That almost-year I lost I feel has cost me so greatly with my son. He really became very attached to his Dad during that time and he still now always gravitates to his Dad when before we had had such a close bond. I've tried so hard to get that back, but it's totally robbed us of the inseparable connection we used to have.

I had a lot of questions asked of me at work. My supervisors visited me at home. For someone who really likes to keep a lid on my private life and is hard-wired to be presentable I found this an enormously difficult and tasking time. I had no choice but to take anti sickness tablets, but they made me feel hugely out of whack. One of the brands I took made me feel really sedated and spaced out. I do not drink as I hate to feel out of control, so this drug was a real last resort. My supervisor wanted me back at work and was telling me that they only work if you take them regularly. I found that anti-sickness tablets are a very individual thing and people respond differently to different tablets. I cannot say that I have found any cocktail of medication that rid me of the nausea completely. The nausea for me was the worst part. I would have a constant feeling of nausea overridden by engulfing waves of nausea. Being sick was not the worst part; it was hands down the nausea.

I was off work sick. I was feeling sick. I became very unhappy very quickly. HG ruined our holiday as I could not leave the bed and we drove home in the end with me vomiting into bags. HG became the third wheel between my son and me. It became a demon that kept me away from my job and I

quickly became seen as an issue at work. There were other pregnant people at work-making it in every day!

It was not long before I felt depressed. I became lower and lower and lower and sadly this trickled into new motherhood. HG then robbed me of the special days with my new son. It affected my relationship as we could not do anything together anymore and we had previously enjoyed eating out together.

My son is now 15 months and I absolutely adore him but the HG shadow that was cast over me has not left me yet. I am surprised at the lack of understanding. It is not treated seriously by many Doctors. It is daunting, it can be scary, it's lonely, it's isolating, and it's misunderstood. I know I could never go through another HG pregnancy because I feel it took every bit of strength, I had to make it to the end – and then some.

It's a fight. It is like you've unwittingly entered a marathon when you've not even had any training.

HG infiltrates every aspect of your life.

I know this affected my kids, I know it affected my partner – he had to keep working full time, run the house, look after the kids we already had and I'm a horse owner. He isn't a horse person and he did them every day for me as I couldn't get out of bed. Sadly one of my horses died . I can't say it's as a result of this directly but I know if I'd been able to do the horses myself I would have noticed the health issues this horse was harbouring sooner and maybe, just maybe, he could have been saved. That is not my partner's fault in any way. He did so well to hold down our fort. It's another layer to the endless layers of suffering from HG.

I feel bitter that it exists but my bitterness is futile as there's nowhere to vent this bitterness. HG is a phenomenon. One thing that could have eased me angst or made the situation slightly more bearable would have been some understanding. I felt the only person who understood was my partner as he saw how desperately ill I was.

Unfortunately, the understanding stopped at the threshold of our doorway. I didn't know that Pregnancy Support sickness even existed then. I don't plan to ever have another baby but I feel so strongly that other women don't endure the circumstances, the loneliness and the lack of understanding I received. If I could give one bit of motivation as it is so easily lost when you're in the midst of HG; it's that I promise you it is worth it.