

Pregnancy & Your Heart

A Mum's Story...



WELCOME TO THE PUMPING MARVELLOUS FOUNDATION



Pregnancy is an incredible thing; a woman's body goes through many changes to reach that moment when your baby is placed in your arms.

These changes can make everyday activities difficult for most women. Unfortunately, for a very small number of women their heart struggles to deal with this. It could be due to an underlying heart problem or due to peripartum cardiomyopathy, a condition affecting the muscle of the heart around the time of childbirth.

This condition is rare, but early recognition is important in order for the condition to be effectively managed and treatment given. Read the stories of Emma, Aleena, Michelle and Tracy.

Emma's Story

After my condition not having been picked up prior to being taken ill, I had been finding it increasingly difficult to walk anywhere. I could not breathe lying down flat at night and was breathless even just talking. Alongside that I had been having unusual chest palpitations which I had never felt before.

Having been pregnant before, I knew that I had never experienced these symptoms and this made me extremely worried, I did not tell my family as this would have made matters worse. My midwife became extremely concerned as did my GP who sent me back to my local A&E with a letter. If he had not insisted and done this, my son and I may not have been here today, I truly believe he saved my life and that of my then unborn child. I was lucky and now live a relatively normal life working part-time and looking after my two sons.

If you experience any of these symptoms, the key is to go to your doctor if you are at all concerned.

Michelle's Story

Prior to my daughter's birth I had been struggling to catch my breath and my heart rate was high. Once my daughter was born I felt better, however, three days later I couldn't catch my breath again and could not breathe lying down, this carried on for a few days.

I collapsed in my GP's surgery on the following Monday morning, my GP called 999 and I was taken to hospital. After numerous tests I was told I was in heart failure, my body had been carrying fluid that my heart could not pump away so I was placed on a drip which then began removing the additional fluid and I was placed on life-saving medication to help repair the heart failure.

I now live a relatively normal life and work part-time also looking after my two daughters. I believe if it had been caught early enough I would have made a full recovery.

If you have any of these symptoms don't simply ignore them, speak to your GP or Midwife about your concerns.

Tracy's Story

I gave birth to my eldest son in July 2008 and had a good pregnancy with no issues. When my son was two weeks old I began to feel very ill and got worse hour by hour. I was taken to the GP and rushed to hospital, diagnosed with cellulitis and sepsis. I don't remember much about it. I felt a bit delirious and had a very high fever.

I was kept in hospital for a few days and began to recover from the infection. However, whilst in hospital I began to swell up from the ankles all the way up my abdomen. I had put 20lbs (9kgs) of fluid on. I mentioned it to the staff and they dismissed it and sent me home.

Once home I was struggling to breathe, especially when lying down. A friend of mine worked at the local hospital as a sister in A&E and advised me to go there. I followed her advice and had some bloods taken and a chest x-ray done. A chest x-ray found fluid on my lungs and I was told I was in heart failure. I was kept in the coronary care unit for five nights and I lost all the fluid after being put on a drip to remove the excess fluid. I was kept on meds for just four months.

A year later I had a scan of my heart done and the results from that were very good. Those results, my continued recovery and support from clinicians and other ladies who had been through this helped us to manage the condition.

Aleena's Story

After being diagnosed with Postpartum Cardiomyopathy by my clinician I had a heart device fitted in April 2011 after the birth of my baby girl. This device has truly saved my life and helped to stabilise my heart enough to be able to live a relatively normal life despite having heart failure. When I was stable the device gave me the chance to improve my heart function further and that in turn helped me to deal with heart failure and begin to live again.

With regular check-ups and knowing my limitations, I can live a relatively normal life.

The authors are all Mums who have been diagnosed with peripartum or postpartum cardiomyopathy.

Emma

Emma

Michelle

Michelle

Tracy

Tracy

Aleena

Aleena

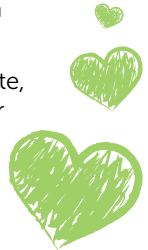
Normal Signs / Things to Look Out For

What are normal symptoms in pregnancy?

- Getting short of breath on overdoing things
- Swelling of the feet, ankles and hands - especially towards the end of the day
- Being uncomfortable at night in bed and frequently having to change position
- Feeling tired
- Gaining weight
- Heartburn, a burning sensation caused by acid passing from the stomach to the oesophagus
- Bloating, nausea and vomiting
- Backache
- Occasional palpitations

What are things to look out for?

- Getting breathless on minimal exertion or when lying flat
- Waking during the night very breathless, having to sit upright to get your breath and gasping for air, this may be accompanied by a cough
- Swelling of the feet, ankles and legs that can extend to the top of the thighs
- Excessive weight gain of 2 to 3kg (4 to 5lbs) in 3 to 4 days
- Palpitations, the sensation of a racing heart rate, skipping beats, long pauses between beats, or fluttering
- Chest pain



If you have any concerns then take this booklet to your
GP, Midwife, Health Visitor or Obstetrician.



*Another Mini Toolkit by The Pumping Marvellous Foundation
Crowdsourced information from REAL patients.*

Acknowledgements

Angela Graves Heart Failure Nurse Manager East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust

Dr Laura Shaw Central Manchester University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Midwife Ann Issa Central Manchester University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Dr Sarah Vause Clinical Director for Obstetrics St Marys Hospital Central Manchester University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Professor Bernard Clarke Consultant Cardiologist Central Manchester University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust



Contact Us

Any questions call us on our dedicated line
07803 424408 or call us free on **0800 9 788133**



www.pumpingmarvellous.org



hearts@pumpingmarvellous.org



Twitter [@pumpinghearts](https://twitter.com/pumpinghearts)



Pumping Marvellous

