

Your Health

A precious month with my tiny Autumn

HAYLEY HOVEY, 33,
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Positive! My husband Paul and I were both so thrilled to find I was pregnant – and on Valentine's Day too.

After the trauma of an early miscarriage the previous year, I was desperate for everything to go well.

And it did, until a scare at 23 weeks, when I woke in the night with a stabbing pain in my tummy.

I was concerned, but the out-of-hours doctor reassured me I'd feel better in the morning – and he was right, I did.

Then at 27 weeks... 'I can't feel the baby

Why had Hayley's little girl stopped growing?

moving,' I told Paul anxiously.

In hospital, I was put on a foetal heart monitor – my own heart racing with fear.

Thankfully our little baby was still alive. We were so relieved – until a scan showed she hadn't grown since I'd had that terrible tummy pain a month earlier.

Doctors swarmed round me.

Then a consultant explained: 'We need to do an emergency Caesarean to save your baby's life.'

Paul and I stared at each other in stunned silence. Were our dreams about to be shattered after all?

The moment she was born, our tiny 1lb 3oz daughter Autumn was rushed to the neonatal

intensive care unit.

When I was wheeled up to see her six hours later, I was overwhelmed with love and fear. Autumn was on a ventilator and looked so small and fragile.

She did well for a few days, but complications soon set in and our daughter was put on a life-support machine. A few weeks on, there was nothing more doctors could do.

The tubes and wires were disconnected and Paul and I held Autumn for two precious hours. Our despair as she passed away was indescribable. We'd only had our precious girl for a month.

When I finally felt able to struggle back to my office job, I put my endless tiredness

down to depression and grief.

Then I started having tummy pains, with diarrhoea and sickness.

My doctor felt a lump in my side – near where I'd had that stabbing pain in pregnancy.

Tests showed bowel cancer. I needed urgent surgery.

'How can so much go wrong for us?' I asked Paul in disbelief.

Then I started wondering... 'Is the cancer the reason Autumn was premature?' I asked the specialist.

'Almost certainly,' he explained. 'The tumour blocked the blood supply to the placenta, and that's why she stopped growing.'

But Paul and I had no time to dwell on this devastating news.

On the doctor's advice we had IVF, freezing a total of nine embryos before I embarked on months of chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

It's now been nine months since my treatment finished.

I'm currently in remission. And if I'm still clear in two years' time, Paul and I will get the go-ahead to try for another baby.

No child will ever take Autumn's place in our hearts. But we hope becoming parents again one day will help heal our grief.



During treatment

Autumn was 1lb 3oz



Paul and I will try again

HAYLEY'S CONDITION

What is it? Bowel cancer occurs when cells in the bowel multiply out of control.

Who gets it? About 40,000 people a year in the UK, equivalent to one diagnosis every 15 minutes. Most sufferers are aged over 50, but bowel cancer can affect any age.

Symptoms A change in bowel habit, or an upset tummy for three weeks or more, bleeding, a pain or lump in the tummy.

Treatment Surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy as necessary. Encouragingly, nine out of 10 cases are successfully cured if diagnosed early.

More info bowelcanceruk.org.uk or call 0800 840 3540.

£250

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