

# In sickness and in HEALTH

When Sarah Beaumont's husband needed a kidney transplant, there was no doubt in her mind about what she needed to do

**W**hen Sarah Beaumont arrived home excitedly to tell her husband Carl that she'd found a good minibreak deal for the coming weekend, his response wasn't what she expected. 'I was excited to share what I'd found, but Carl said it was likely he'd be in hospital then. I didn't understand what was going on,' says the 41-year-old from Wakefield, West Yorkshire. 'He told me he needed to get to A&E at Pinderfields Hospital as quickly as possible.'

Carl, now 52, had been driving their son Remy, now 13, home from his kick-boxing class in November 2020 when the hospital had called to say he needed to come in immediately. 'They'd told him he was in renal failure, with only 4% kidney function,' Sarah explains. 'We were both in a bit of a daze as he packed some things together.'

A routine eye test at the opticians several weeks earlier had revealed a bleed behind the eye. The optician had referred Carl for blood tests at the Eye Centre in Wakefield just

two days prior to the hospital's phone call. 'The situation had turned from assuming the bleed was linked to high blood pressure to something completely unexpected,' Sarah says.

Due to lockdown restrictions, Carl had to go into hospital alone while Sarah had an agonising overnight wait for an update. 'It was the longest night of my life, and utter relief when I finally got a text in the morning from Carl,' Sarah remembers. 'But over the next week, while he stayed in hospital, we couldn't keep in touch as much as I had hoped. It was incredibly stressful.'

By the end of the week, they received the shocking news that not only would Carl need regular dialysis treatment but he might also need to go on the waiting list for a kidney donor.

A couple of months later, Carl started the gruelling process of dialysis, driving 26 miles to Seacroft Hospital in Leeds three times a week for treatment, which would consume up to five hours of his day. It was

doing the work of Carl's kidneys, removing waste products and excess fluid from the blood. Although vital to avoid wastes and toxins building up in his bloodstream, the dialysis was putting a strain on Carl's heart.

After five months of the life-impacting treatment, it became clear that dialysis could not be the long-term solution and that Carl would need a new kidney. 'He faced possibly months or years on the kidney register to find a donor with a suitable blood and tissue match,' Sarah recalls. 'Carl never

asked any family or friends to put themselves forward but, of course, it was something that weighed on many of our minds.'

Unfortunately, some close family members were immediately ruled out as donors due to a history of cancers. Then his niece Freya, his best friend Andrew and Sarah put



**'We were both in a bit of a daze'**

WORDS: MICHELLE ROWLEY





**The family, all happy and healthy, at a wedding in Italy last summer**

themselves forward. 'I just had a feeling it was going to be me and mentioned it to a friend,' Sarah says. 'She reminded me not to get my hopes up, as the chances were incredibly slim.'

Amazingly, as Sarah had sensed, she was a match. After two days of extensive testing at St James's University Hospital,

Leeds, doctors confirmed she had 118% kidney function. In excellent health, she could proceed with the donation. 'I was elated and felt absolute relief that he would get a new kidney,' Sarah smiles. 'My mum had concerns that something bad would happen but I refused to give the thought space. How



**Carl and Sarah enjoy their first post-operation lunch date**

could I look my children in the eye if I don't do this?'

Surgery was booked for just three weeks later. Carl and Sarah's daughter Miesha, now seven, would be starting school two months after the couple's dual operations, which gave Sarah a target. 'I focused on us both being able to take her to school on her first day, and visualised the moment of her walking with us in her new uniform,' Sarah says. 'Staying positive helped me to feel more in control during a time when so much was out of my hands.'

Another stressful hurdle was the 24-hour wait for PCR test results before their operations. A positive result from either of them would result in cancelled surgery. When they received the call to say they could proceed, it was met with nothing but relief. 'We didn't tell the children what was happening because we knew it would be scary for them that both parents were in surgery,' she says. 'Mum would be there to take care of them, so we just told them Daddy was going to get a new kidney and I needed to be there for him.'

Then, in July 2021, Sarah and Carl parted ways at the hospital on the morning of the surgery.

'See you on the other side!' they told each other. Three hours later, Sarah woke from her operation with one kidney removed. Carl was brought in to see her before he headed into surgery to receive that kidney. Then, they were reunited on the recovery ward after the successful transplant operation.

When Sarah phoned home to let her mum and children know that everything had gone well, Remy asked, 'It was you, wasn't it, Mummy?' She was discharged the following day, while Carl stayed for five days to ensure his body didn't reject Sarah's kidney.

'Recovery was long and painful for both of us, but at least we could do it together side by side on the sofa,' Sarah says. 'Now, Carl has three kidneys and I've got one. It's incredible that I was a match, and we joke that subliminally he must have known when we met 20 years ago.'

'We took "in sickness and in health" to the extreme. Now I get a cup of tea whenever I want, and we get to celebrate our "kidneyversary" as well as our wedding anniversary.'

**\* To find out more about kidney donation, visit [organdonation.nhs.uk](http://organdonation.nhs.uk)**

**'Remy said, "It was you, wasn't it, Mummy?"'**

that everything had gone well, Remy asked, 'It was you, wasn't it, Mummy?'

She was discharged the following day, while Carl stayed for five

days to ensure his body didn't reject Sarah's kidney.

'Recovery was long and painful for both of us, but at least we could do it together side by side on the sofa,' Sarah says. 'Now, Carl has three kidneys and I've got one. It's incredible that I was a match, and we joke that subliminally he must have known when we met 20 years ago.'

'We took "in sickness and in health" to the extreme. Now I get a cup of tea whenever I want, and we get to celebrate our "kidneyversary" as well as our wedding anniversary.'

**\* To find out more about kidney donation, visit [organdonation.nhs.uk](http://organdonation.nhs.uk)**