

# “My newborn forgot how to breathe”

When Finn was born prematurely, Fiona Harasyn, 37, from Bromsgrove, could only watch as he battled for his life...



Fiona with the son she nearly lost



Finn spent five weeks in intensive care...



... and had to be fed intravenously

**W**hen I returned to work in July 2010 after having my daughter Amber, 2, I wasn't expecting to find out that I was pregnant again so soon. My husband Lee, 38, and I had spoken about having another child and even though it was a little rushed, we were excited that Amber would have a sibling to play with. But little did we know the problems that lay ahead.

### “THE FIRST SIGNS”

While I was pregnant with Amber I suffered terribly with hyperemesis gravidarum, a severe form of pregnancy sickness, so it was no surprise that I had it second time round. I was sick 24 hours a day and couldn't keep much food down. My doctor recommended I take some prescription tablets to help ease the symptoms, but I continued to feel drained and suffered occasionally with sharp pains.

It was hard looking after both Amber and myself when I was so ill, but I never thought it

was a sign that things were taking a turn for the worse.

### “A HUGE SHOCK”

On Saturday, 15 January 2011 at 9pm, I was watching television when I felt a sharp pain. I stood up and was horrified to see blood everywhere. I was only seven months along in my pregnancy and kept thinking it was much too early for my baby to arrive.

Crying, I managed to pull myself up the stairs to wake Lee, even though I was starting to have contractions. He held me tightly as we waited for the ambulance, but when it turned up my parents still hadn't arrived to look after Amber so he had to stay behind. As I was lifted into the ambulance I looked out at Lee through tear-filled eyes, scared to go to the hospital alone. Then the doors shut and I was on my way.

When I got to the hospital I was having contractions but wasn't dilating, so the nurse gave me a steroid injection to help my unborn baby's lungs. Lee arrived shortly afterwards and holding hands we watched as the time went by, not knowing what was going to happen. Twelve hours later I had my second steroid injection and immediately I began bleeding heavily. Before I knew it I was being rushed into theatre to have an emergency caesarean.

### “IT FELT LIKE A BAD DREAM”

On Sunday 16 January at 10am, my beautiful baby boy Finn was born two months prematurely weighing just 4lb. While most mothers are able to hold their child straight away, I was unconscious and when I woke in the evening it felt like a bad dream. I couldn't see my son and had no idea where he was. Lee held my hand firmly and took me to see Finn who was lying with a mask on, surrounded by wires in an incubator. I wanted to gather him up in my arms but I couldn't, he was too fragile to be held.

The doctors came in and calmly explained our son's situation. There was nothing specifically wrong, but because Finn arrived two months early he wasn't fully developed. He had lots of problems with his lungs and was struggling to breathe - most premature babies keep forgetting how to. We were warned he might not make it through the night. Shaking, I kept asking, 'Why him? Why my special little boy?' It felt like I'd failed him. He was going through so much and there was nothing I could do.

Lee and I sat by his crib in fear for the first 24 hours, watching as from time to time he struggled to breathe. The beeps from the machines sent shivers through my body as a constant reminder that he needed me to watch over him. The doctors were on standby all night and relief washed over us as he made it through to the morning.

### “IT WASN'T OVER”

Finn was in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit hooked up to multiple drips to make sure he was getting everything he needed. He was fed intravenously as he was losing weight and his incubator was kept warm because he was too premature to be able to regulate his own body temperature. After a week he weighed just 3lb. He then caught a bad case of jaundice that turned him such a dark shade of yellow that it broke my heart.

Lee and I were there with him every step of the way, watching as the doctors did tests to check his blood levels were normal. He underwent a lot of phototherapy (the use of light to treat newborn jaundice) and thankfully after a week he got the all clear, despite his breathing remaining unstable.

Juggling looking after Amber as well as visiting Finn was hard as my time felt so stretched. The hospital was 20 miles away

and because I'd had a caesarean, I was unable to drive. I got three buses to the hospital every day, which took two hours, and I was always in tears when I arrived. I felt guilty that I couldn't be there more.

### “THE BEST NEWS”

After five weeks in intensive care, we got the news that Finn could come home. I was so happy, but reality soon hit me when the nurse explained that I had to do resuscitation training before I left. Finn was still so fragile, weighing just under 4lb, that I had to know the basics in case he stopped breathing. I shook as I practised on a doll, hoping to never have to do this to my little boy. When I finally got him home, I felt complete.

### “OUR LITTLE STAR”

Finn's now a happy 1 year old who loves attention. He's still on first stage baby food because of his size, but his breathing is much better. He gets very wheezy when he gets a cold and is likely to suffer with asthma when he's older, but he's getting stronger by the day. We last had him weighed in November and he was a much healthier 17lb. I'm so thankful that Finn stayed strong and made it home.

WORDS: AMANDA PAULEY



Finn enjoys a stroll with mum and big sis Amber



From a fragile 4lbs to a cuddly 17lbs

## HOW TO BOND WITH YOUR PREMATURE BABY

- Get involved with your baby's care by learning to wash and dress him.
- Get your baby used to your voice by singing or talking to him.
- Use Kangaroo Care and hold your baby against your chest, skin to skin.
- If you're really struggling to connect with your newborn, talk to your GP or health visitor.



Skin to skin contact was vital for Finn