

# Brink of DEATH

**Michelle Stevens, 33, from Brighton, didn't know how she would cope when she found out she was pregnant...**

**H**olding the pregnancy test, I couldn't believe it. *I couldn't be?* I panicked.

My husband Gavin, 39, and I weren't trying for a baby, and after having two horrific pregnancies in the past, I really didn't want to put myself through it again.

Due to having polycystic ovaries, I couldn't take hormonal contraception, but Gavin and I were always safe. Suddenly, I had flashbacks to my previous pregnancies.

Whilst pregnant with my daughter Sarah, now 13, I had been incredibly sick.

I was vomiting constantly. Like Kate Middleton, I was diagnosed with hyperemesis gravidarum when I was eight-weeks.

It lasted throughout my pregnancy and sadly came back to haunt me when I fell pregnant with my son Joshua, now 11.

Although they were both worth it, I wasn't sure my body could cope again.

What if it got so bad I couldn't eat my beloved pizza and chocolate?!

Unfortunately, instead of feeling excited about the news, I was filled with dread.

And when I showed Gavin, he felt the same. We decided it best to

book a scan to see how we felt.

Then we could make a more informed decision. After all, anything could still happen.

Only, by the time I was four weeks gone, the sickness kicked in.

At first, it was just regular morning sickness, but come six-weeks, I was admitted into hospital for IV fluids and anti-sickness medication.

Within a matter of just a few weeks, I was unable to keep anything down.

I was constantly running to the toilet to throw up.

I'd dreaded the sickness from the moment I found out I was pregnant, and this time, it was worse than ever.

I was in so much pain from all the retching, and I was unable to look after my eldest

two as I was so weak from the severe vomiting.

I wasn't getting any nutrients, as I couldn't even keep down a dry cracker.

By the time I was 12-weeks pregnant, I was throwing up more than 50 times a day – and that was with medication.

I was barely through my first trimester, and I was spending all my time in bed or in the hospital on a drip.

The kids were being looked after by their grandparents and my weight was now dropping by the second.

I was so weak from malnutrition.

'I want a termination,' I told Gavin and doctors at 13-weeks.

As awful as it sounds, I didn't think my body would cope to full-term.

I genuinely believed that either I or the baby would die anyway – if not both of us.

Before falling pregnant, I was a size 22 to 24, but now I'd lost so much weight, I fit into a size 18.

You're meant to put on weight when you're pregnant!

'Let's just think about it,' Gavin soothed.

Deep down, we both really wanted this baby.

The thought of terminating killed me, but I didn't know what to do.

However, after a few days, we decided to continue with



**I was in and out of hospital**

the pregnancy, but we knew it wasn't going to be easy.

So, we organised that from 16-weeks, we would start having 4D scans.

'I need to know what I'm doing this for,' I said.

Then, staring at the grainy black and white image, I knew I loved this baby.

'He sort of looks like an alien,' I giggled.

I wanted to give the kids a sibling, but this was the worst pregnancy I'd had yet.

I couldn't eat a thing – not even a slice of pizza or a square of chocolate.

I was constantly admitted to hospital from dehydration.

However, the scans gave me something to focus on. I could see what I was fighting for.

Thankfully, with regular monitoring, the baby was doing well, but as awful as it sounds, my main concern was myself.

Doctors had to insert a PICC line into my arm to feed me nutrition and when things were really bad, I needed a TPN which put food directly into my veins.

It bypasses the gastrointestinal tract to ensure I was getting nutrition.

As the weeks passed, I became weaker and weaker.

'Please eat something,' Gavin

**WORTH FIGHTING FOR**

would beg, but I physically couldn't stomach it.

Although I'd had bad pregnancies with the other two, this was the worst.

There was no joy at all. Even when the baby kicked, it would leave me hunched over the loo.

We kept regular scans so I could focus on the end result, but there were days where I just wished I would die.

Some days, I didn't even have the strength to remind myself of the two beautiful, happy children I already had to live for. But on the days where I did, that got me through.

I was missing out on so much – even Josh's tenth birthday.

'Sorry Mummy can't come to your party,' I told him.

I didn't want them to think I didn't care, and the loneliness was unbearable.

Sometimes I lay on the floor in the bathroom or I'd be in bed with a bowl.

As my mouth was so dry, I found myself constantly

craving ice-cold water.

Although I knew what I was fighting for, as my pregnancy continued, my body struggled.

Within just a few months, I had lost a whopping 5st 3lb.

I was on and off an NJ tube as the normal feeding tubes weren't working.

My body was close to death. I couldn't walk or move.

I could barely even talk. Honestly, I didn't know how

my body was surviving, let alone growing a healthy baby.

Although I was worried about the health of my unborn child, I didn't have the strength to think about it too much.

Gavin did what he could, but there was nothing that could be done.

By the end, I was so weak that I was



**Ollie was perfect**

booked in for a C-section at 34-weeks, but I held on for another month.

As horrendous as my pregnancy had been, all my mother's instincts kicked in and I wanted my child to be as healthy as possible.

After 38-weeks of living hell, on 4 June 2020, Ollie arrived weighing 6lb 11oz.

'Here we go,' the midwife smiled at me.

Holding him, everything just washed away.

None of the past nine months mattered.

And that day, I ate my first meal. A cheese sandwich and a pot of jelly!

Unfortunately, after everything we'd both been through, there were some complications.

Ollie had some respiratory issues and struggled to breathe.

He stayed in hospital for just over a week, but finally, we could bring him home.

The kids loved him and he was worth every single second.

After nine months of barely eating or drinking, my weight

dropped to 9st 7lb.

I'd lost a lot of weight and sadly, my sickness journey wasn't over.

Ollie is now one-year-old, and I still throw up daily.

I can't even eat my favourite foods as pizza is too greasy and chocolate too rich. I throw up just at the thought of them.

I have now been diagnosed with severe gastroparesis and weigh just 8st 2lb.

However, life is much better and Ollie so special.

My pregnancy with him was more than rough, so I try not to be too hard on myself for having such negative thoughts.

When people ask about my experience, I always tell them how rare it is.

Since having Ollie, I've managed to get in touch with some helpful online communities on Facebook and a charity called Pregnancy Sickness Support.

It's only recently that Gavin's opened up about everything that happened.

He really struggled.

'I thought you were going to die,' he told me recently.

I can't even imagine what it was like for him, and he's now writing a book about my story.

There are lots of women who are suffering, and there needs to be more awareness about it.

I hope my experience can be a starting point.

● Read more of Michelle's story: [pregnancyfromhell.co.uk](http://pregnancyfromhell.co.uk)



**My wonderful family**

**I was a size 24 before**