

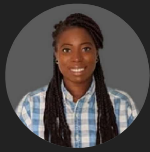
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Voices

I got pregnant during lockdown – I'm lonely but the thought of leaving home still scares me

When I go for a walk and a person runs closely past me or I see people wearing their masks on their chin indoors, I can't help but feel anxious and an insatiable urge to return to my pregnancy-safe cocoon I call home



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• 2 Comments



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Anyone who has considered having children, will have imagined what it would be like and that includes having our parents, grandparents, siblings, and friends nearby to share the excitement with and turn to for comfort and words of encouragement when it all seems too much.

But due to the restrictions, not only have we been unable to share the various “firsts” with our loved ones in person, we have also had to go without the company of other pregnant people.

Perhaps it's the scenes from *Friends* or the critically acclaimed (and might I add, incredible) Canadian sitcom, *Working Moms*, that had me looking forward to anecdote-worthy antenatal classes or forming strong, albeit slightly dysfunctional, bonds with other expectant mothers.

Instead, I have found the past seven months particularly lonely.

Technology has been a lifeline for much of the global population during the pandemic and in many ways, we are the most connected we have ever been. It is not, however, a substitute for a hug from your mum or a kiss from your grandma.

Informing people about the **pregnancy** in person was something that was particularly difficult. I had imagined telling my best friend and jumping and screaming hysterically together. Instead, I told her over the phone. She was, of course, overjoyed and it was a moment that I will always remember, but much like telling my in-laws, my godmother and various other friends and family, it was a much tamer affair than what we'd all hoped.

We often hear about morning sickness as a sign of pregnancy, but we rarely hear about all the other things that come with it: the breasts so sore that a soft breeze could induce tears; the horrific taste in the mouth that stops you from enjoying any food at all; the insomnia.

During these moments, you need to be physically close to a loved one who has been through it before and who can offer encouraging words, reminding you that this won't last forever and you have the strength to get through it.



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The last minute changes to the tier system right before what I like to refer to as Covid Christmas were also difficult. After almost a year of being apart from my family, like many, I was heartbroken when the announcement was made. It was going to be the last Christmas without a little one running about.

Now don't get me wrong, **lockdown** hasn't been all bad. My partner and I have been fortunate enough to stay in employment during the lockdown and we've also been able to work from home. We both work in London but live in North Hertfordshire, so it's been a great opportunity to save financially, and more importantly, share the majority of the pregnancy together as a couple.

Even though I had to attend the first and second scans alone, and have been to



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Now the rates of infection and deaths have gone down significantly and so in theory, we should feel fine to venture out of the house with nothing but a two metre distance and a mask to protect us.

But when I go for a walk and a person runs so closely past me that they catch my jacket, while breathing so heavily that I can smell the last meal they ate, or I see people wearing their masks on their chin indoors, I can't help but feel anxious and an insatiable urge to return to my pregnancy-safe cocoon I call home.

I'm usually very sociable, so prior to the pubs and restaurants opening, I found myself counting down the days to being able to see my friends and family in person again. Now, almost a month on, I'm yet to set foot in a hospitality venue, albeit outside, for fear of what may still be lurking in the air.

With under eight weeks remaining of pregnancy, I'm very excited about having people over to meet our new addition and entertain people at home. But when I think about the reality of this, I feel more anxiety than excitement – what will they expose my baby to? Will I feel happy for them to hold my child? Perhaps I should insist that only those who have been fully vaccinated can hold the newborn?

I am trying to be positive and to focus on the encouraging data. I know at some point we will feel “normal” again. But for the time being, the best plan of action seems to be doing a little at a time, hoping that gradually the great outdoors will become enticing once again rather than the virus-laden enemy it currently is.

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