

The baby BONUS

Natasha and her husband wanted to try for one more baby, but peering at the screen, they gasped...

Me and Jordan with Finley, Lily and Molly-May

Collapsing on to the sofa after another busy day at work, my husband Jordan handed me a glass of wine.

'Thanks, love,' I smiled. Finally, some time to relax, I thought.

We both worked full time, and with three children under seven, we barely had a moment to unwind.

But as our brood, Molly-May, seven, Lily, five, and two-year-old Finley got older, we started to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

The relentless night feeds and dirty nappies were soon a distant memory.

Life was calmer, but part of me desperately missed that newborn stage.

Growing up as one of five, I loved the buzz of a busy household filled with love.

And I'd made no secret of the fact I wanted a big family when I met Jordan.

He hadn't ever thought about kids until he met me.

But once our little Molly-May was born, he was smitten — and agreed to have another,

and another...

'Don't you think another one would complete our family?' I asked him, for the millionth time.

'We've got our hands full already!' he replied. 'Maybe at the end of next year, once we've got our finances in order...'

I was so excited, but tried to keep the idea out of my mind, as we both had a busy year ahead.

Only, days later, I was at work when my phone pinged.

As I glanced at it, my stomach flipped.

It was a notification from my period-tracker app.

Your period is one day overdue, it read.

I knew my body and it ran like clockwork.

If I was a day late, there was only one reason for it...

At lunchtime, I dashed out to buy a pregnancy test.

Hiding in the toilet, it felt like an eternity waiting for two minutes to pass.

But when I finally looked at the little stick, two lines stared back at me.

So much for trying next year! I tried to call Jordan, but when

he didn't pick up, I nervously took a picture of the test and typed: Can you give me a ring back?

He called within a couple of minutes, and I could almost see the smile on his face.

'This is the best news ever!' he cried. 'It'll be tough, but we'll make it work.'

We found out a week before Christmas, and I loved keeping our little secret as we wrapped the kids' presents.

I usually breezed through pregnancy, but a week later, I spent most of Christmas Day in the bathroom.

I couldn't even finish my dinner.

As I lay my head on Jordan's lap that night, I looked at him.

'You do realise there's a chance this could be twins?' I winked.

We laughed, but by the time my

12-week scan arrived, I seriously

started to think it could be two.

My bump had sprouted and I'd been sick every single day.

Yet with my previous three, I'd been fine.

As the sonographer set to work, Jordan and I stared at the screen in stunned silence.

Not one baby.

Not two babies.

But THREE babies!

'I've never seen this before,'

An ultrasound scan showing the triplets

said the sonographer.

'I need to get a doctor.'

Soon, the doctor confirmed that Jordan and I were going from being a family of five to eight overnight!

We were having triplets! We were overjoyed — but overwhelmed.

'It's just even more love to share around,' I said, eventually.

'We'll figure it out,' Jordan added.

We knew we had to tell the kids, so we gathered them together that night.

Finley was too young to understand but the girls were absolutely thrilled.

'Aww, more babies!' Lily squealed.

'I can't wait to tell all my friends,' Molly-May added, with a big smile.

Friends and family rallied



My bump at 33 weeks

three more? I wondered.

I kept my mind off worrying by starting an Instagram account, *Triplets plus three*, where I posted pictures of my growing bump.

People were so lovely and interested in our journey!

Despite a couple of scares, the babies managed to stay put until I was 33 weeks and four days.

I went into labour, but the hospital was on standby to deliver them by Caesarean.

As I was wheeled into theatre, Jordan squeezed my hand.

We were both so excited, but nervous too.

In time, Frankie, Elsie and Louie came into the world, safe and sound.

Frankie was breathing well on her own, so I was allowed to cuddle her after she was born.

The other two were taken to the special-care unit, but it wasn't long before the nurses

were helping me position all three babies on a pillow on my lap for our very first cuddle.

We stayed in hospital for a few weeks, which helped

get the babies into a routine.

By the time they came home, they were feeding like clockwork.

Their siblings were desperate to meet them, but we didn't want it to be in the ward, where they were hooked up to machines.

On the day, Jordan and I collected the babies from hospital while the older ones were at school, so they were waiting to surprise them when

they came home.

They were absolutely delighted, and relished having so many new siblings, helping soothe them when they cried and reading them stories.

Now, we've settled into life as a family of eight.

It's not without its challenges, though.

Even after upgrading our car to a seven-seater, I can't fit all the

kids in to do the school run — so I walk all six to school and back every day thanks to my triple buggy.

We've had to rearrange our

four-bed home to fit everyone in — Jordan and I have lost the main bedroom to the babies!

And we need to figure out whether Jordan and I can both continue to work when my maternity leave is over.

It's going to cost us £3,500 a month for our children to be in nursery part time.

Having said that, family is the most important thing to us, and

we feel so fortunate with our wonderful brood — even if it's a little bigger than planned!

It's chaos, but we wouldn't change it for the world.

Natasha Pendered, 33, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire

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Me with the triplets

All of us together

