

Anna's story

My infertility story starts in 2003. After various tests it was found that due to male infertility, it was very unlikely my husband would father a child naturally and ICSI would be our only chance of having a baby.

My experience of singleton pregnancy and birth

On our second ICSI cycle, while we were living abroad due to my husband's job, I become pregnant.

After a troublefree pregnancy, I had a traumatic and tough, 11-hour labour in which none of the pain relief seemed to work. I was eventually assisted with fundal pressure (external pressure applied at the top of the uterus), then ventouse (vacuum extraction, using a cup that fits on the baby's head) and gave birth naturally to a beautiful, perfect daughter weighing 6lb 15oz. To add to the horror of the experience, due to a retained placenta (when part of the placenta remains in the womb after birth) I started to haemorrhage, so had the placenta removed manually under a general anaesthetic.

We always knew we wanted more children and, despite the trauma of my first experience of giving birth, we decided in March 2006 that we would try another cycle of ICSI later that year, after my husband returned home from working abroad.

Fertility treatment

On my husband's return, we followed the same protocol as our 2nd cycle although the dosage of my drugs was increased due to the poor response from the last cycle.

I produced 10 eggs in total, 5 were frozen and two were transferred. Two weeks later a blood test confirmed I was pregnant once again. We were absolutely delighted and a few weeks later we had a scan which revealed we were having twins.

My experience of multiple pregnancy

The pregnancy started off pretty well. As with my last pregnancy, I had no morning sickness but at 8 weeks I suffered a bleed. I was devastated and was sure I had lost one of the babies, however, a scan a few weeks later revealed two heartbeats. I knew I had to take things easy, especially with a young toddler to look after but I really struggled early on in the pregnancy.

I started to suffer from Braxton Hicks contractions at 18 weeks. At 20 weeks I was admitted to hospital with an infection that had caused my cervix to dilate and

I was sure this time it was the end of my pregnancy. After a week's bed rest I was discharged and struggled on with the pregnancy.

At 34 weeks pregnant my measurements were those of someone who was 42 weeks pregnant and at my 36-week hospital appointment I was begging them to induce me early.

Being pregnant with twins has been one of the most physically demanding things my body has ever had to cope with. The hospital agreed they would start to induce at 37+1 weeks only because the twins were a good size and twin 1 was head down. By 37 weeks I was absolutely huge, my legs had swelled so much that they thought there was a blood clot at one point and sent me for a leg scan. Luckily it was only a build up of fluid.

My experience of multiple birth

At 37+1 weeks I arrived at the hospital in the morning. An ultrasound confirmed the babies were fine and I was given a dose of gel to start contractions. By 8.30pm my waters broke and I was taken to the delivery room. Having received an epidural, I didn't push for long before my first son was born – it was such a wonderful experience having no intervention, unlike the birth with my daughter.

As soon as twin 1 was born, it was as if the medical team went into a mad panic to get twin 2 out as he was breech. I had someone giving me an ultrasound, someone else with a heart monitor, someone else trying to break the waters of twin 2, then someone giving me an episiotomy.

A few minutes later the contractions started again and I was told to push and push. I was already exhausted but knew I had to get this baby out. Eventually twin 2's bum appeared, much to my relief, which turned to horror when I was told his arms were stuck above his head and he could suffer broken shoulders if they didn't pull his arms down.

It seemed like an eternity and also felt like I was being murdered but they got his arms down and got him out to find he was blue with the cord wrapped around his neck. I didn't even get to hold him, or even know whether he was a boy or girl: he was swiftly taken to another room.

It was the longest 15 minutes of our lives: we didn't know whether he was dead or alive. We were eventually told that he was fine but needed to go to special care where he spent the first 5 days of his life. My two boys had fantastic birth weights for 37 weeks, twin 1 weighed 6lb 7oz and twin 2 weighed 6lb 6oz, which isn't bad considering I'm only 5 ft 3 in and weighed 9 stone before the pregnancy!

Caring for twins

We knew that having one baby was difficult and when the twins arrived, we knew it wouldn't be easy.

To be brutally honest the first six months were awful: there were lots of tears, not a lot of sleep and lots of arguments. My twins are now 10 months and things are much more relaxed in our household. In order to survive I need to stick to a routine: everything with the twins gets done at the same time, they are fed at the same time, sleep at the same time. Our daughter also falls into the routine, she eats with the boys and has a bath with the boys but we also have the added extra of tantrums.

We sometimes feel it would be easier with triplets! I do find it difficult to split myself into three sometimes but try my best each day to spend quality time with each of them at some point.

It's been a hell of a journey to get to where we are now. I honestly thought I would never experience pregnancy, childbirth or be a mother, but I feel most privileged to be a mother to not one but three lovely children.