



HER FOUNDATION

HYPEREMESIS EDUCATION & RESEARCH

HER Foundation
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HG Survivor and mother of two, son (1999) and daughter (2003)

HER Story

My first pregnancy was a surprise. We had only returned home from our honeymoon two weeks prior to the onset of Hyperemesis Gravidarum (HG). I thought it was just the stress of the wedding, moving and beginning graduate school that was aggravating my stomach and making me feel exhausted. We were shocked but happy when the pregnancy test was positive. The nausea became progressively worse until I awoke suddenly at week 5 and began vomiting uncontrollably for hours on end. A week later, I was in the hospital for the first of four times. I doubted the cause suggested by one doctor, that I subconsciously did not want the baby and that vomiting was a way of expressing rejection. It seemed absurd since we very much wanted the baby.

For eight weeks, I couldn't stand up without vomiting. My husband had to do everything for me, increasing my frustration and depression. I felt helpless. The sight of food, bright light, noise and motion all made me sick; thus I laid in a dark, quiet room. The days seemed endless and the pain of my muscles atrophying grew worse as fatigue overwhelmed me. My stomach would grind and burn from the emptiness. Any pressure on my abdomen, even clothing, triggered vomiting. As I laid there watching the ceiling fan circle, I wondered what they would do with my baby if I went insane or died. I felt as if I was slowly dying and couldn't do anything about it. I eventually withdrew from school and life due to the overwhelming physical and mental fatigue.

We exhausted our finances trying every viable treatment, including complementary care. The only real relief came when I was given the medicine, Zofran, which eased the nausea and vomiting. After 16 weeks and a loss of 20 pounds, I could finally eat small meals and began the slow process of regaining strength to sit up and walk again. Occasionally, I would force myself to leave the house, as much for my sanity as for my body. However, the exertion required three days for recovery. Progress was thwarted near the end of my 2nd trimester, as the nausea worsened due to severe reflux and the rapid growth of my baby. I stopped gaining weight and my body grew weaker. Painful spasms would leave me breathless, and occasionally one of my legs would give from the physical stress. By delivery, I often required assistance to sit and stand and could lift just 5 pounds. Finally I was induced and after 30 long hours, our beautiful 8 pound 14 ounce son was born. I only gained 14 pounds during my pregnancy, thus I was weak and nutritionally depleted postpartum. Recovery was difficult and required over two years to overcome the emotional trauma and the physical debility.

Armed with a new strategy and OB, we decided to try again, hoping to enjoy this pregnancy. Just in time for Father's Day, we found out that we were pregnant, and the fear of what was ahead was almost overwhelming. Fortunately, we were prepared with support and medication. I began on Zofran at 4 weeks in hopes of keeping the symptoms from getting too severe. It made the first 14 weeks less miserable than my first pregnancy, though I still lost 10% of my body weight. My symptoms worsened again around 26 weeks. Most days I was able to manage only small tasks due to increasing weakness and fatigue; however, it was tolerable compared to my first pregnancy. This time, I only gained about 13 pounds total over my pre-pregnancy weight. Following a cesarean section, my beautiful 6 pound 7 ounce daughter was born—healthy. As with my first pregnancy, I spent numerous hours at the dentist and am still trying to overcome the chronic fatigue. My husband and I are grateful for the excellent medical care I received and the delivery of two healthy children, especially since we will not have more. I am also thankful for the unwavering support of my husband, who stood by me through it all.

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Kimber is the Founder of the HER Foundation and dedicates countless hours counseling HG sufferers and survivors.