

## Amy's story

I am 26. I've never had regular periods and I've always had months where I've skipped periods, then had two in one month. I always just thought it was how my body worked. I began to become more concerned when I didn't get my period for three months in a row. I assumed this was just down to the stress of moving house but I went to the doctors and got checked out just in case. I had my hormones tested and that's when I received the devastating news.

I received a two-minute phone call from the doctor saying 'do you know what FSH (follicle stimulating hormone) is? It basically means your ovaries are failing and you're going into an early menopause, ok bye!!' Seriously, that happened.

The next few months I went for countless blood tests and scans while my whole world fell apart. I went into a deep depression and couldn't hold down my job anymore. I had to move back in with my parents. It felt like I had lost everything I had ever wanted. I am an extremely maternal person, I love being an auntie to my nieces and nephews and all I've ever wanted is to be a mum.

So after many bad test results, each as devastating as the last, I was then referred to a specialist. He retested everything and confirmed my diagnosis, premature ovarian failure (POF). He also tested for genetic causes (fragile x syndrome etc.) but it all came back normal so I don't know what has caused this. It's really hard questioning why this has happened to me, is it something I did wrong?

So I started trying to conceive pretty much the month after I found out about my diagnosis and spent the following year and three months doing everything I could to try and make a baby. Even though I had been told not to try IVF, I felt that I had to as I didn't want to look back and think I could have done more. I wanted to try everything I possibly could so I didn't have to live with the guilt later in life that I hadn't tried hard enough.

I tried to go for IVF but every cycle was cancelled straight away at the base line scan due to lack of eggs - I tried four different fertility clinics, none of them could help me. It was exhausting gearing myself up every month, getting my hopes up and then being told I don't have any eggs to work with. I was a complete mess for this year. It made me feel like less of a woman, like a failure of a person. I couldn't understand why this had happened to me, I was literally living my worst nightmare every day.

During this time I had many hormonal symptoms which mimicked early pregnancy and took a test pretty much every month, always negative. I think it was just my hormones were so crazy they gave me endless symptoms - hot flushes, weight gain, irritability, dry skin, headaches etc. etc.

In October 2015 I had yet more symptoms so I took another test not thinking anything of it and it was positive. I could not believe it. My baby is due in three weeks.

I'm still in complete shock and the last two years have felt like an out-of-body experience, it doesn't feel like my life. I feel traumatised by the shock of it all but so incredibly lucky to have been able to conceive. I'm still faced with the complications of early menopause and possibly secondary infertility if we would like to try for another child, but I am proof that the doctors aren't always right. They can tell you what the facts and statistics say but no one really knows what's going to happen in each individual case. With seemingly no egg supply left, I managed to conceive, I believe other people with POF have a chance too.