

The Story of Amelia and Grace by Jo G

The last 2 years have been somewhat of a rollercoaster for our family. Following a miscarriage at Easter in 2006, we found out I was expecting again in the November. I was unsure of my dates and so I was sent for a scan, which revealed no baby. We were devastated and thought that the miscarriage was happening all over again. I was told to come back 2 weeks later for another scan just to confirm that was the case. 2 weeks later we went back for the scan and were told, "There's a heartbeat". We were thrilled but as I was only 6 weeks we were still apprehensive.



On New Year's Eve I had a bleed and so we were back at the hospital for another scan. The night before, I convinced myself that we had lost another baby and was prepared for bad news. When the sonographer started scanning she said, "You greedy girl!" There were twins and they were identical. Wow! What do you say to that? My husband David's first words were, "My BMW!" – he knew that he was going to have to get rid of his pride and joy to buy a car big enough to fit baby twins and a pre-schooler in. The next couple of weeks were a bit of a blur as we were in total shock.

Then at 12 weeks we had the normal nuchal screening scan and were told that there might be a problem and to come back a week later. So at 13 weeks we went back and were advised that our babies had a 1:7 chance of having Down's syndrome. We decided to have a CVS (like an amniocentesis) to find out, as this would be a major undertaking. I had the CVS within the hour. It was very painful and David nearly passed out but I just kept thinking of our babies.

We were told that the results would be rushed through and we would know within a few days. They told us that if they rang and asked us to come in then it was something serious like Down's syndrome, Edwards' syndrome or some other fatal condition. Three days later the hospital did ring and ask us to come in – Oh NO. We had to wait until the following afternoon before they could see us. It was the longest 24 hours of our lives.

When we went in the consultant told us that firstly we needed to know that our babies were girls (I was thrilled) and that they had a condition called Turner's Syndrome which only affects girls. He went on to explain that this condition would mean that they would have short stature, and that they would be infertile. Also there could be many other problems – like heart problems, liver or kidney problems, problems with eyes, ears or physical deformities, but they would live a relatively normal life. We were over the moon. Compared with what we thought it could have been.



The next few weeks of the pregnancy went on as normal. I had a scan at Southampton at 20 weeks to check the babies' hearts but they were fine. I had to go every 2 weeks for routine scans at Poole to make sure that I didn't develop twin-to-twin transfusion, which can be fatal for the babies. We had been warned to watch out for sudden growth of the bump or extreme hardness. At 27 weeks I started to feel quite uncomfortable, more than I had done at full term with my son, so I went down to the hospital to get checked out. They just listened to the heartbeats, said everything was ok and sent me home. I was still not sure and all my

friends kept telling me to go back. So at 28 weeks I went back.

This time whilst they were prodding around trying to find the heartbeats, I went into labour. I was taken down to the delivery suite and hooked up to a drip giving me drugs to try to stop the labour. I was also given steroids to mature the babies' lungs. Fortunately after about 8 hours the contractions stopped. The next morning I was scanned and it was confirmed that I had developed twin-to-twin transfusion. At this stage of the pregnancy the best way to treat it was to drain off some of the excess amniotic fluid. They did this later that morning and drained 4 litres of fluid from me – I felt like a deflated balloon. Suddenly I could move again. We were told that this was only temporary and that it would happen again over time. Over the next few days I had to stay in hospital as my blood pressure kept plummeting, but by the Saturday, 5 days later, I was told I could go home.

I rang David to come and get me and then the consultant came to check me over before I left. She said that she was not happy with one of the babies' heart rates and that they would have to deliver them that day. I was taken down to the delivery suite and the midwife rang David. Within 2 hours I was in the operating theatre. All through my pregnancy I was determined to avoid an epidural so I was very nervous about having it done. Once everything was numb, David came in and within 2 minutes Amelia was born, it was so quick I didn't even see her as she was taken off to the side of the room to be seen to. 1 minute later Grace was born, I saw her and couldn't get over how tiny she was. I will never forget the feeling of elation at giving birth to 2 babies but the fear of losing them both. Once they were stable they were taken to the NICU and David followed. He returned with 2 photos and the news that they weighed 1lb 10oz and 1lb 14oz. Wow, I never realised that babies could be that small.

The girls were on breathing support for only 2 days and spent the following 9 weeks growing big enough to come home. They had no further complications whilst in hospital. I came out of hospital 3 days after they were born and 2 days after that was my son, Thomas' 3rd birthday. To top all the excitement, Thomas was very ill with tonsillitis on his birthday and I was very torn between looking after him and being at the hospital.



The following week we were due to move house and on the Tuesday the van was loaded with all our belongings and we went to my parent's house to wait for the phone call telling us that completion had taken place. This did not happen until 4pm the following day and the removal firm could not move us until the Thursday afternoon. It was a nightmare, but after everything we'd been through it just went over our heads.

Since coming out of hospital the girls have both had laser eye surgery due to their prematurity. Also they are very bad sleepers and are unable to eat anything other than puree due to their Turner's syndrome. It is hard work, not only dealing with twins, but twins with special needs due to their prematurity and their Turners syndrome.

We are preparing to celebrate their 1st birthday this month and it will be a very emotional time. At 1 year old they weigh only 15lb and 16lb, they are only just trying to sit and crawl, but they are our miracle twins and they, and us, have come a very long way.

Photos show Jo and both girls, Amelia a few days old and David with Grace, one week old.