

Background

I am soon to be 38 years old with a wonderful son born August 2012. He was conceived naturally after 11 months of trying. I found out I was pregnant 2 weeks before I was due to have an appointment at the HARI clinic by referral of my GP.

My husband and I started trying for another baby in November 2013. In June 2014, we made an appointment at MFC to get us both checked out. We had suspicions based on the first pregnancy that something may not be working as it should/ could be. I'm glad we did. We both had some tests (bloods, semen analysis, ultrasound scans) performed over the summer of 2014 and met with our consultant. Tests showed a low AMH level (a 6). It was possible for me to get pregnant, my egg reserve is low, but not disastrously so. We decided to continue trying ourselves for another few months. Ultimately we decided in November 2014 to proceed with planning our first IVF treatment cycle early in the New Year based on my natural cycle dates.

We were tentatively booked in for egg collection the week of Feb 2nd.

Fertility Testing

11th July 2014

Blood Tests and Scan

July 2014

Consultation to discuss results and possible options open to us, i.e. IVF.

IVF Preparation

17th November 2014

Follow up consultant appointment to proceed with IVF treatment beginning in Jan 2015.

26th November 2014

Injection Training with the nurses and detailed discussion about plan of medication, timelines, etc...

9th December 2014

Blood Tests – Anti-virals - for both of us.

Treatment Cycle 1

17th December 2014, Wednesday

I rang the nurse line to confirm Day 1 of my natural cycle. We agreed that Day 21 would be 6th January and to begin nasal spray (Suprecur) on that day. Need to try to stay as healthy as possible for the next 3 weeks, notwithstanding the time of year (!). I'm also attempting to get used to drinking as much water as possible every day. It will be worth it...

1st January 2015, Thursday

New Year and a big one. Fingers crossed it's a good one. My almost constant thoughts about having another baby and where I am in my cycle or what day it is (1-28) have been supplemented with nervous excitement.

6th January 2015, Tuesday

D-day to start the drugs. My timeline is 2 sniffs at 6 a.m., 10 a.m., 4 p.m., and 10 p.m. to fit in with my day. Have set phone reminders and reminders on my work calendar to make doubly sure I remember.

I'd a meeting in London but can factor in the spray around flight and meeting times – even managed to do my spray in duty free at 4 p.m. as I couldn't find the toilet and wanted to make sure I stuck with the allocated deadline.

First impression is that it tastes disgusting. And maybe my nose was drier than normal? There was no dripping which I found surprising – probably foolishly, I don't think I was expecting it to be a little more liquid rather than vapour. I also discovered I needed the 2 litres of water as opposed to it being optional/ recommended.

7th January 2015, Wednesday

Today, my eyes have become very dry. I've also developed a headache.

8th January 2015, Thursday

Day can be summarised as bad taste and dry eyes.

12th January 2015, Monday

I feel hung over and have a headache. My period has arrived which explains the general clumsiness I felt all weekend - 2 cuts to my thumb in one day. I was expecting a bleed but maybe not a full on period.

19th January 2015, Monday

Despite my valiant efforts to drink 2 litres of water every day, I'm still constipated. Other symptoms include:

- bad headaches (taking paracetamol)
- tiredness
- low appetite
- sweats/ elevated temperature
- disturbed sleep
- heavy chest – deep breaths more difficult

20th January 2015, Tuesday

Typically (!) I have a cough and cold developing. Been well all winter but unfortunately I seem to be getting sick now. No congestion in my head though. No idea if it's related to the medication. I only managed a half dose at 10 a.m. as my spray bottle ran out. Had to leg it home from work early for the 4 p.m. spray. Lesson learned.

21st January 2015, Wednesday

Baseline scan with nurse today to check my ovarian activity and womb lining. The scan showed all is quiet and the lining is minimal, i.e. my spraying efforts have worked! Blood taken also to check the hormone levels – all fine.

Instructions for now are to continue to use the nasal spray and to start the Puregon injections between 7.30 and 9 p.m. daily. I'm choosing 8.30 p.m. after my son's bedtime. Scheduled for another scan and blood test on Tues 27th January.

Worked myself up for the first injection with a bit of quiet time. Watched the video on YouTube on what to do to remind myself how to do it. First injection was much easier than I expected, I think because the needle is very fine.

22nd January 2015 – 26th January 2015

.....spray, inject, spray, inject.....

27th January 2015, Tuesday

Follow up scan and blood test with nurse today. 9 follicles visible in the scan, all developing nicely.

Feeling a little bit of discomfort/ heaviness in abdominal area generally. Have tenderness and bruising on left side only.

30th January 2015, Friday

Follow up scan and blood test with nurse today. 10 follicles are growing now, an extra one since Tuesday. My right ovary is not responding to stimulation as well as the left one though. Nurse rang me back in the afternoon to say we're giving it the weekend to try and let the right side catch up.

As regards injections, new development is bleeding on the left side after injecting ☹️ Feel fine other than that though.

31st January 2015, Saturday

Have found acupuncture brilliant for lots of things in the past so scheduled an appointment today to try and help thicken the lining of womb and stimulate the right side. Lying back and relaxing for an hour wasn't bad either.

1st February 2015, Sunday

Another follow up scan and blood test with nurse today. What else would you be doing on a Sunday morning! The 2 boys went to Merrion Square playground to wait for me. Follicle size today – Left: 18, 16, 15, 15, 14; Right: 14, 12, 12, 6, 6.

Trish rang me within 20 minutes after speaking with the consultant. We're not ready to trigger yet -trying to get right side to catch up a bit more. One more day of injecting requested by the doctor.

2nd February 2015, Monday

Further scan and blood test with Gillian today. Good news! Right side has caught up – an 18, 2x16, 15, 14. All 10 follicles are >14mm. Each >14mm could produce a mature egg. Typically need 3 x >17mm follicles before triggering release.

General feelings today - Back pain, discomfort/ heaviness in abdominal area, pain in back of right knee (this one probably unrelated?).

Gillian rang me in the afternoon. We're ready to trigger – no more Puregon, last nasal spray at 4 p.m. today. I have to do the Pregnyl trigger at 8.30 p.m. sharp tonight. Gillian went through the instructions again to remind me. I also watched the video on the website.

My husband was unavailable that evening so I got my Mum to come over to help me around my son's bedtime if I needed it. Didn't want to miss the 8.30 p.m. deadline!

The Pregnyl injection hurt!! And the site bled a little. Nervously excited about what the rest of the week holds but also positive that I'm doing everything I can to make this work.

3rd February 2015, Tuesday

Drug free day at last. No spray or anything. I've to fast from midnight which is no biggie, tend not to eat while I sleep ☺️

I'm tender on the left side of my navel from the Puregon, and tender on the right side from the Pregnyl. Both injection sites are sore. I chose my outfit for work badly and was uncomfortable all day. Recommend soft/ loose/ no waistband for future reference.

Early night tonight. In-laws have collected our 2.5 year old from crèche and are keeping him overnight as we've to be in the clinic early in the morning. No problem sleeping which I thought was unusual.

4th February 2015, Wednesday

Egg Collection day has arrived. We'd (both of us) to be in the clinic at 7.50 a.m. Clean room procedure - no strong odours, no jewellery, no make-up, no nail varnish, etc..

Nurse (Tara) made me feel relaxed and comfortable as soon as I arrived. My husband had to go off and do his part of the process. It was a short procedure for me; don't remember anything (as Tara had assured me). When I got back to the recovery area, hubby was waiting for me.

We got 8 eggs! Not a bad start.

I was a bit fuzzy while I came around from anaesthetic but we were done and dusted by 10 a.m. Slept for 2-3 hours with a hot water bottle when I got home. A bit tender in my abdomen and crampy but took paracetamol every 4-6 hours which kept it at bay.

5th February 2015, Thursday

Duvet day. Still a bit tender in abdomen and crampy. More hot water bottles and paracetamol every 4-6 hours.

Embryologist called with great news – all 8 eggs fertilised ☺ Need to be prepared for embryo transfer either Saturday (Day 3) or Monday (Day 5).

6th February 2015, Friday

Another duvet day. See 5th Feb.

7th February 2015, Saturday

Embryologist called Saturday morning. 1 of the 8 fertilised eggs/ embryos arrested so we have 7 embryos that continue to mature. We're going to wait until Day 5 (Monday) for transfer.

9th February 2015, Monday

Booked in for transfer at 12 so just popping out from work at lunchtime. Clean room protocol again. Both of us have to attend, hubby in scrubs ☺

There was 1 standout Grade 2 blastocyst for transfer. The nurse (Caroline) performed the procedure. It was a little like a smear test, bit uncomfortable mainly because of my necessary full bladder.

We saw the droplet coming out of the catheter on the ultrasound scan. Now we just have to wait – the hard part.

In hindsight I wish I'd taken the day off. Feel a bit weird for the afternoon (likely all in my head), can't concentrate on anything at work.

Start progesterone pessaries every night.

10th February 2015, Tuesday

Very tired. Also have bad diarrhoea – possible tummy bug or reaction to all the treatment? I asked my local pharmacist if I could take anything for it if I thought I might be pregnant. He asked how far along I was – queue awkward silence “eh, I had an embryo transfer yesterday”. “Oh I see.” He advised it was a risk vs benefit situation and that I couldn't afford to get dehydrated, etc...

More acupuncture this evening as discussed with my acupuncturist to try and assist implantation.

Embryologist called, only 1 of the 6 remaining blastocysts is of a satisfactory quality to freeze. Both of us were a little disappointed with that.

11th February 2015, Wednesday

Still very tired. Have been mostly great physically and mentally. Think all the treatment is taking its toll on me.

12th February 2015 – 16th February 2015

Tick tock, tick tock. Trying to keep busy but impossible not to be aware of what I hope my body is doing right now. Will know on Friday 20th one way or another. Blood test booked in the a.m.

17th February 2015, Tuesday

Period arrived. Devastated! Heartbroken! Afternoon in work is a bit of a blur, was crying/ upset for most of it. Hubby left work early to come home with me. Both of us are absolutely gutted. Rang the nurses and told them.

20th February 2015, Friday

Blood test required regardless of period arrival to test hormone levels and check if anything at all happened. Need to wait for consultant appointment to discuss next steps. Stopped nightly progesterone pessaries.

25th February 2015, Wednesday

Consultant appointment. Had a list of questions (including anything I could have done differently - no), and had a good discussion with the consultant. Hormone levels from bloods show implantation didn't occur. Next step if we wish is to move ahead with frozen embryo transfer (FET). We do. Need to have a full natural cycle before I start preparations for that. Will start 3 tablets a day on Day 1 of my next cycle. Based on dates looks like maybe 17th March.

18th March 2015, Wednesday

Period a bit late, not unexpected given the level of medication I've been taking.

21st March 2015, Saturday

Period arrived. Day 1 – started taking 3 tablets a day. Take it with my meals.

23rd March 2015, Monday

Rang nurses to tell them I had my Day 1 and that I was back on medication again and to re-affirm dates for embryo transfer.

1st April 2015

Scan to assess ovarian activity. All quiet again as anticipated.

2nd April 2015 – 6th April 2015

Still 3 tablets daily. Started progesterone pessaries again at some point

7th April 2015

Another scan to assess thickness of womb lining. Conditions are good so we're going ahead with FET tomorrow.

8th April 2015

Arranged to work from home today and will pop into town at lunchtime for the transfer. Prepped at home – shower, no products for clean room, full bladder, etc...

Got call from embryologist (Jackie) at approx. 10 a.m. to break bad news. The embryo did not survive the warming process. Devastated and heartbroken all over again.

9th April 2015

Elaine checked in with me to see how I was doing and about next steps. Asked her to pass on my apologies to the embryologist who had the rotten luck of having to deliver the bad news. I was completely unable to speak and was inconsolable on the phone the previous day ☹.

Overall the drugs were manageable and didn't bother me. The procedures were fine too. I've discovered that by far the hardest part of the process is the result.

20th April 2015

Consultant appointment to discuss events and way forward. We talked about doing anything differently, what we may have learnt from the previous 4 months experience, etc., etc.. It was emotional. In short, we can try IVF again but the recommendation due to 1) my age, 2) my low AMH levels and 3) the first treatment cycle experience (possibly poor quality eggs), is to not wait more than 6 months to start again.

We took a walk through Merrion Square together and decided to go for it once more. No regrets!

Treatment Cycle 2

May 2015

Rang the nurses to talk through possible dates based on my natural cycle, impact on holidays, etc... We're going with tentative egg collection the week of the 17th August (just in time for Electric Picnic!) The only thing that has physically changed for me since the first cycle is that I started couch to 5k with a few friends in April and am running about 5k 3 times a week. Doing what I can to be fit and healthy for cycle #2. A bit of escapism too.

5th June 2015, Friday

Bloods done to cover off my AMH & TSH that needed to be refreshed for this treatment cycle (it's been more than a year between first AMH & TSH tests and starting the next treatment cycle). Anti-virals are still current thankfully.

3rd July 2015, Friday

Day 1 of my period. Dropped my prescription into the chemist – ever the optimist I didn't want to fill it if it was not going to be needed. I'll be injecting a different drug this time - Menopur. We're going to try and up the number and/ or quality of eggs collected and play the numbers game.

9th July 2015, Thursday

Booked in with nurses (both of us) to sign consent forms and get a refresher training on injecting - slightly different manner of administering the drug this time – just syringe, no pen. Same size needle though so it should be fine – phew! Drinking my 2 litres of water per day. This means peeing a lot but to be fair I don't feel as tired as normal. Maybe that's a habit I should keep?!?

23rd July 2015, Thursday

....Back on the rollercoaster. Hello again nasal spray. Still the same taste, the same dry mouth. Feeling more anxious than excited this time around. Not sleeping. Could be a long 6-8 weeks!

24th July 2015, Friday

Lips drying out – didn't notice that in January because it was cold anyway so just blamed the weather.

27th July 2015, Monday

I'm using a Headspace app to help me to go to sleep at night, seems to be working. Have dry eyes and am a little constipated. Trying to further increase my fluid intake today.

28th July 2015, Tuesday

Dry everything – skin, eyes, lips, hair, and throat.

31st July 2015, Friday

Period arrived. Hormonal and irritable – not sure if it's just worse PMS than normal or the medication. Head is like a sieve, I hit a pillar when trying to park this morning and generally a bit all over the place.

4th August 2015, Tuesday

Exhausted! Awake more than asleep last night. Busy weekend with our son's 3rd birthday party. We all had fun but I was very tired. Nice distraction at the same time. Feel like I've been using the nasal spray forever now, just want to start the injections. Getting a little impatient. Think I'm losing hair – big handful after the shower this morning.

5th August 2015, Wednesday

Mega tired. Baseline scan and bloods at 8am. Ovaries are quiet and womb lining is thin. So start injections tonight between 7.30 and 9. Nasal spray to continue.

6th August 2015, Thursday