

## *'I was induced due to an OC pregnancy'*

**CLARE NAUGHTON, 29, IS A CHEMISTRY TEACHER AND LIVES IN BIRMINGHAM WITH HER HUSBAND CRAIG, 29, AND THEIR DAUGHTER ANNA, 5 MONTHS** ✦ **Length of labour 10 hours** ✦ **Pain relief Gas and air, epidural**

**A** couple of days before my 28-week appointment with my midwife, I noticed that my hands and feet were itching. I thought maybe I'd come into contact with something that had irritated my skin, but although I was furiously itchy, there was nothing visibly wrong with my skin.

The following night, the itching was worse; I woke up and had to run my hands under cold water. I vaguely remembered reading something about itching in my maternity notes, so I searched for information online. Of course I knew you shouldn't try to diagnose yourself from things you read on the internet, so despite my concerns that it might be obstetric cholestasis (OC) I decided to talk to my midwife about it the next day. When I explained my hands and feet felt like they were burning, my midwife insisted I go to hospital that day to have blood tests.

### *Worrying times*

By the time I got the blood results, I knew there was something wrong. I was right – I had OC, which meant my liver was misbehaving, pumping enzymes and other bile salts directly into my blood stream. One symptom was the itching, but it could also have a serious effect on my baby.

My head was spinning as I knew from the internet search I'd done that it was serious. I had loads of blood tests – twice a week, then once a week, then eventually once a fortnight as my levels came down again. After three weeks of taking

medication, I stopped itching all the time. But I was still really stressed out – I felt as though my body had let me down, that I had done something that was putting my child at risk. It's normal to induce OC patients early to reduce the risk to the baby, so my consultant booked me in for an induction at 38 weeks. It seemed so simple – suddenly I had a date on which I would go into hospital and have my baby. Little did I know, it wouldn't be as easy as that...

### *Signs of distress*

On the big day, I was excited and nervous at the same time. At the hospital, a prostaglandin pessary was inserted, which was uncomfortable but not painful. I waited for the contractions to start, but nothing happened, and the midwife told me that I'd have to wait another 24 hours before trying again.

The next morning, I was given a second pessary. I still had no contractions, but in the afternoon I was taken to the delivery suite, and put on a syntocinon drip. Not much happened, but I had some contractions and after about five hours, the anaesthetist gave me an epidural, which allowed me to sleep. But by morning, there was concern that the baby's heart rate indicated signs of distress.

Eventually, my labour progressed enough that I was allowed to push. The midwives were very encouraging, and after 40 minutes, my beautiful little daughter Anna Rachael was born, weighing 6lbs 8oz. I'd been so worried about her, so to see that she was fine was the most amazing feeling. It was also a bit unbelievable that I was actually a mum! We were discharged the next day and went home as a family. I saw the liver consultant

again three weeks after the birth and at nine weeks, I was finally signed off completely.

✦ For more information on obstetric cholestasis, visit [ocsupport.org](http://ocsupport.org)

### **Funniest moment...**

The gas and air had such a strong effect on me that when I was offered some water I said, "I don't even know who I am. Ask Craig!"

### **What I wish I'd known...**

That when I was awake at night, itching and worrying, that my little girl would be worth every bit of discomfort, fear and worry.

### **Craig says...**

When Anna was first born I just stood there thinking how perfect she was, it didn't even occur to me to think whether she was a boy or a girl! 

