

## MY PREGNANCY JOURNEY (the mini novella)



Ahhh... the gift of being a woman....

I've always thought it was so unfair that women have to go through the long discomfort of pregnancy, the body changes, the pain of labour, the loss of freedom whilst breast feeding and the career road blocks that it all entails. Yet men – the lucky bastards - just get to have an orgasm and voila, they get to enjoy becoming a parent the easy way. It just doesn't seem fair! Maybe I'll just adopt a child to skip all of that inconvenience. While I'm at it, maybe I'll just adopt an adult and skip the sleeplessness caused by babies, the terrible toddler tantrums, puberty and ungrateful emotional teenagers! Sounds like a plan, no?!

I've always been torn between the emotions of curiosity, fascination and complete discomfort when it comes to abnormally swollen bellies with creatures crawling around inside..... And I've always been terrified of the birthing process itself. How is it possible to get something the size of a watermelon out of a hole that usually only has to endure appendages the size of a zucchini?!

Yet now that I am experiencing my own pregnancy journey, I am constantly surprised by the experience, and the array of emotions and thoughts that arise. I have to admit that, as cliché as it sounds, I am incredibly grateful and humbled to be blessed with the opportunity to bring a tiny human into this world.

We're often told in life what pregnancy is like – the morning sickness, the extreme fatigue, the shortness of breath, the cravings, the mood swings, the heart burn and indigestion, the back ache, the stretch marks, the swollen feet, forgetting what your vagina looks like, not being able to bend over, the waddling etc But nothing truly prepares you for the reality of how difficult and uncomfortable it can be. I now have humongous respect for every woman who has survived pregnancy! My hat goes off to you all, really, you are incredible!

Yet I'm one of the lucky ones. I've had a pretty easy pregnancy so I can't really complain.... I know I'm making it sound highly unappealing, and I'm not going to lie, it certainly has its moments, but in all honesty, it is truly incredible. The body is an amazing thing and the whole process of creating a life is absolutely mind blowing. (There are some women however that say they absolutely love pregnancy. They're either a) incredibly lucky to have such easy pregnancy's, b) they're lying, c) they're insane or d) they have a beautiful mindset which I just can't achieve!)

As socially expected, the clock starts ticking as you approach 30. I could hear it as loud as an emergency siren. Now, I don't believe anybody should have to conform to the pressures of society's norm – everybody has the right to make their own decisions about what they do with their lives without judgement. But for me, I was ready to start a family with my husband. Well, as ready as you can ever really be! We reached that point where the party days are well and truly over, where we enjoy nights in at home, going to bed early and waking early; that point where we were ready to give up complete selfishness and focus on the needs of another soul. We are excited to embrace the unconditional love, joy and endless life lessons of being parents.

I spent my whole life diligently avoiding the possibility of an unplanned pregnancy – I went to such great lengths as to use both condoms and contraception for many years much to my past boyfriends displeasure! Finally, it was time to let it all go. I came off the pill after almost 15 years and the calendar watching began. I was determined not to let the stress of trying to fall pregnant consume me. I was mentally preparing myself for it to take up to a year to conceive, yet I still eagerly approached my due date for my period with bated breath.

My first period was a few weeks late and I took a pregnancy test feeling blown away that it could happen so soon! False alarm. It was just my body adjusting to having to produce its own estrogen again after so long. The following month my period came on time though. Right I said, the gear is in working order, let's do this. Sure enough, 2 weeks later, we conceived. When my period was late this time around I was wary that it would just be another false alarm. We stared at the stick and the second blue line was so faint I felt my heart drop. If I'm not pregnant then why was my period late I fumed?! What if something was wrong with me?! I began googling what a faint line could mean and online consensus seemed to point to it being a positive test result. I began to get excited – could it be true? Was I actually pregnant after all?! I felt a bit silly about my previous fleeting thought of jumping to the conclusion that I might be broken and would have to do IVF and not end up having children until my 40s.....!

I waited another week before taking another test. It was torture. I wanted a definite YES or NO dammit! I wanted to know if we were allowed to be excited or not. I acted all calm and composed, putting the stick on the kitchen bench and walking away like I didn't care what it said. After a minute or so my husband and I went to look. "The second line is still faint" I said. "Nope, that's a definite second line. You're pregnant!" my husband assured me. Wow. This is actually happening. Shit. Disbelief. Excitement. Terror....

The next 6 weeks were incredibly difficult. I struggled keeping my mouth shut in a big way. I wanted to sing it from the roof tops but my husband wanted to wait until the 'safe' mark of 12 weeks before telling everyone, just in case I miscarried. I thought about the fact I was pregnant almost every second of every day. I thought about how my body was going to change and how our lives were going to change forever. I looked at my belly in wonder, trying to grasp the reality of what was growing inside of me. It consumed me completely and my mind was constantly racing a million miles per hour. I didn't even know where to start – what do we do now? We booked in to the doctor to get the ball rolling – blood tests, urine test etc

Around the 7 week mark (5 weeks from conception) the fatigue set in. I experienced roughly 3-4 weeks of terrible nausea. I didn't actually throw up at all, but I felt horrible. I went off a lot of food and I always had the worse taste in my mouth. I kept trying to find something to eat that would make me feel better but nothing worked. I went from easily being able to drink 3 litres of water a day to struggling to get down one. And all the while, I continued going to work every day and studying every evening, not being able to tell people how I was feeling and why.

Other than the frustration of keeping a massive secret, and the disappointment in myself that I couldn't seem to keep to the healthy eating habit that I was previously used too (all will-power went out the window, give me comfort food stat!), I didn't experience the wild hormonal mood swings I was prepared for. I meditate regularly so I believe that helped me calm and regulate my emotions. I did however, have one embarrassing break down where I lost the plot!

My husband had given me a voucher for a massage at Endota Spa for my birthday. I thought it would be a good idea to use it before I got too big to lie on my stomach so I booked myself in when I was 8 weeks pregnant. I turned up to the appointment desperately looking forward to some relaxation and pampering and I flippantly told them I was pregnant just in case they needed to know to be more gentle than usual or whatever. I was then shocked to be informed that they are unable to massage women in their first trimester as the toxins that are released may contribute to a possibility of miscarriage! I was incredibly disappointed and asked if I could reschedule, only to be told that I would have to pay a \$50 cancellation fee or I would forfeit my voucher amount seeing as I was no longer attending my booked appointment. What?! I could feel myself beginning to feel quite upset. That isn't fair, how was I to know that it may be a risk? "You should have checked our website" they said. Ummm why would I think to check the website if I didn't think it would be a problem? I 100% honestly did not think it would be an issue. I argued my case but they didn't budge. They suggested having a facial instead. I didn't want a damn facial, I wanted a massage! \*stamp feet\*

And then it happened.... I couldn't control it. Tears exploded from my eyes, snot poured from my nose, and I ran outside to call my husband and hysterically sobbed into the phone like a 3 year old having a temper tantrum "It's not fair....all I wanted was a massage...." The receptionist at the salon obviously became very uncomfortable that she had unleashed some crazy wild woman behaviour in me and she ended up saying that I didn't have to pay the fee after all and eagerly suggested "let's schedule you in for next month shall we?!" Anything to shut the damn woman up and get her to leave before she scares away all the other customers she must have thought! I was getting a few disturbed looks from the women leaving their delightful pleasurable appointments to be greeted by the sight of my hormonal break down! Once I had calmed myself down I felt absolutely mortified and embarrassed by my behaviour. I called my mum to see if that was normal or was I just losing the plot, and instantly felt better when she told me she broke down at a supermarket when she was pregnant because they didn't have banana milk. Well there you go, maybe it's just genetic?! (I sheepishly ended up taking the receptionist a box of chocolates when I went back for my appointment a month later!)

Finally we reached the 12 week mark and I had my first scan. It was surreal seeing the little alien blob jiggling away on the screen and hearing the rapid heartbeat. I just couldn't believe that that was inside me! Wow. Insert ridiculous lop sided goofy grin here. We got the all clear that bub seemed healthy so far – finally we could spread the news! Ah the relief! Self-preservation was keeping us from getting too attached to the blob up until this point, as miscarriage is so common. Now we were "some-what" safe. Although, you're never 100% safe....

Other symptoms of pregnancy began to appear over the next month or so – things such as increased heart rate, bleeding gums and blood noses due to the increase in blood volume, needing to pee every hour (which thankfully slows down in the second trimester), baby brain forgetfulness (I even started to doubt my organisational prowess), countless pimples, a bout of constipation, increased body sweat & body odour, gas and burping, head aches etc It's bizarre what the body goes through.

I kept getting told that the second trimester was the easiest and I was certainly looking forward to it. It took until about week 18 for me to finally start showing a little baby bump (although it could easily

be confused for a large lunch) and for me to finally start getting some energy back. I had a few weeks where I felt completely normal and could momentarily forget that I was pregnant. Although I was constantly reminded of my condition by the fact I had to avoid eating certain foods (certainly made me feel like a prima donna when ordering out at restaurants but I guess it's just not worth the risk...) and the fact that everyone wants to tell you their pregnancy stories. I also went through a stage where my boobs hurt so much that even rolling over in bed was a painful experience as they flopped from one side to the other! (Still, I was just super excited that I suddenly had boobs for a change, definitely a perk of pregnancy – check these out I'd say proudly to my husband!) I had to remove running from my weekly exercise regime as the boob pain was too extreme. I was also told by my doctor to not let my heart rate get above 130bpm for too long when exercising – that's no fun!

Around week 16 I felt the first movement deep in my belly. It felt like a light twitch. For many weeks it was so soft that I was unsure if it was just a normal bodily function, or if really was the baby. Either way, I started getting those ridiculous soft fluffy feelings of wonderment and connection to this little creation growing inside.

Emotions ranged from feeling entitled to special treatment because I was pregnant, to feeling guilty for complaining about pregnancy ailments like I might be over reacting, making excuses, and being precious. I'd have moments where I felt frustrated that my body was not my own anymore and I just wanted to feel normal again, to eagerly looking at my pregnancy app weekly to see what sized fruit or vegetable my baby now was, and to read about what was considered normal at that stage of the pregnancy. (Gotta love technology and the information available today huh!) Sometimes it felt like the pregnancy dragged and was taking forever, and sometimes it felt like it was flying by so quickly.

Around the 20 week mark we went in for the next scan. There's moments when I was riddled with fear – what if there's something wrong with it, what if it's not alive anymore?! But deep down I had a definite knowing that everything was fine, and of course, everything was. The results from the scan combined with blood tests showed that we weren't in the high risk percentile for downs syndrome. We got to see some 3D images of the baby as well and my reaction was "Oh God how creepy!" It really looked like a little alien, it's quite bizarre.

I really enjoyed watching my belly grow – it started to feel more and more real. It took a while to start showing, but once it did, it popped out super quick. I started to get a bit worried about how excessive my weight gain was. The doctor said around half a kg a week was normal but I went through a period where I was putting on 1kg a week! I wasn't too stressed out about putting on fat per se, I was more concerned about my body coping with the sudden change and whether it was considered abnormal pregnancy weight gain or not. The skin on my belly began to get very tight and I could feel it growing and stretching. I felt like an overripe piece of fruit about to split open. I went through a very uncomfortable stage around week 25-28 where the baby was pushing right up against my ribcage. It was highly uncomfortable and sore and it made sitting all day at work and all evening studying an extreme struggle. I was quite concerned that it was so uncomfortable already, as I had heard the third trimester was terrible once the baby had run out of room and all your organs were pushed out your vagina or into your throat!

Eventually though, the baby dropped and the doctor confirmed that it was in the ideal position – head down – very early. This took a lot of pressure off my ribs but meant that as the baby grew, the pressure on my coccyx, pubic bone and hips took the brunt. I must admit, I much prefer that discomfort to the rib pain though so I wasn't complaining. I started to get very concerned that the baby was too efficient too early and that it was going to come out before it was fully cooked. I was

constantly ticking off the days on the calendar until we had reached the point that the baby would survive in the outside world if it did decide to come early. We were told that we wouldn't be able to have the baby in the private hospital we chose before I had reached 36 weeks as there was no neonatal unit so I was eagerly awaiting that date so that I could relax. I wasn't mentally prepared to go anywhere else!

The lovely symptoms of pregnancy continued as the weeks went by – a few bouts of heart burn, major indigestion, a complete aversion to certain foods, an absolute hate of toothpaste (I tried many types and they all made me feel sick), horrible after tastes (which has continued throughout the whole pregnancy, I can't wait for my taste buds to go back to normal!), metallic tasting water, no off switch so eating to the point of discomfort, foggy brain (feeling like you're on auto pilot stuck in second gear when you're trying to function in fifth gear), ligament pain, itchy skin, prominent veins, nipples going big and brown, growing out of my clothes, having to shave blind, misjudging my size and hitting doors and tables etc I honestly have no idea how some women go through entire pregnancy's not knowing their pregnant – how is that possible?! Did they have no symptoms? Did they not put on weight? Did they not feel crazy movements inside them? Did they not feel any illness or pain? I also don't know how some women handle having back to back pregnancies. My boss was one of 9 boys.... his poor mother! I couldn't even begin to imagine....

As my belly grew it seemed impossible to keep my hands off it, like a magnet! At 7 months I already felt like I was huge and I worried that I still had 2 months of growing to go. How could I get any bigger?! I had a little cold for a week and it was frustrating that I wasn't allowed anything other than lemon and honey for relief. When you feel massive and yuck already, having a cold really tips you off the edge! I went through a stage of feeling very self-conscious about my size (and how my belly button had emerged to be as big as a prominent third nipple), and I felt like everyone stares at my belly like a deformity. I no longer felt attractive, but then I got the point where I just didn't care anymore. It is what it is.

The baby's movements gradually changed from cute little twitches, to the undeniable fact that there was a living creature moving around. I began to feel its spirit fingers flailing around like a jazz dancer, and its feet sticking an inch out from the side of my body when it was stretching. I could feel it's spine pushing out too – some times to the point I was so lopsided I had to push it back so I could sit normally again. It's incredibly fascinating and amusing, but also so very very strange. It's hard to believe that there is actually a tiny human inside you, that all your organs are making way for its growth, and that it can actually survive in there for so long floating around breathing in and swallowing fluid (including its own pee. Yuck!). Bub seems to get the hiccups ALL the time and they got more violent over time. The rhythmic jolts can be incredibly annoying when they seem to go forever (they upset my nerves like nails on a blackboard), but the random rolling, punching and kicking seems to be a lot more acceptable and entertaining. I had one night where I woke up to the baby moving so erratically that I was worried it was choking to death and I couldn't do anything to save it. It honestly felt like a cat in a bath tub of water trying desperately to escape. I told the doctor about it and assured me that if something was wrong, the baby would go quiet, not more active. Righto – so that insane activity is normal then?! Geez. (Replays of Sigourney Weaver in the movie Aliens keeps rolling through my head...)

I never had any major or strange cravings, more just cravings for food in general. I always wanted to eat in the second trimester. Cravings were more triggered by seeing someone eat something in particular, and then I wouldn't stop thinking about it until I had it myself. Although I did go through a stage where I wanted carbs and salt all the time near the beginning. I've always had a sweet tooth but I had gotten to a point prior to pregnancy where I had a relatively healthy relationship with the

odd indulgence and that's it. That went out the window once I reached the second trimester. I always wanted treats! Maybe it's a comfort thing, I don't know. People keep saying "eat what you want, it's the one time you don't have to worry about getting fat". That would frustrate me. I'm not worried about getting fat, I'm worried about what all the junk is doing to the health of my baby. Having a Nutritional Therapist degree and knowing about how epigenetics work, I had extreme guilt about what my binging was doing to my baby. It didn't stop me though.... Ah well. Grand plans to fix the epigenetic tags once bubs on the outside!

I'm a fairly fit person, I would say more than the average bear, but definitely nowhere near elite levels. I taught yoga 3 times a week up until I was 7 months pregnant, and afterwards have continued with personal training and my own yoga practice at home. As my belly grew, it really creeped me out how the shape of it would change to a cone when I was in a plank position or when trying to engage my core! If I tried to do any yoga poses upside down I could feel the baby falling in the opposite direction which wasn't enjoyable! I battled with the changes of gravity and the fact I had a heavy & solid bowling ball in my stomach and I could no longer bend over easily. The extra relaxin hormones in the body meant I would feel sore after a workout when I usually wouldn't. The weight would make everything so much harder – jumping or sudden movements were no longer comfortable, I couldn't lie on my stomach or back, groin pain made certain movements inaccessible, deep back bends and twists were out, bladder was squashed, heart rate could spike easily – it was certainly a reminder not to take full range of motion for granted. I don't feel as strong, fit or as capable, but I still do what I can, and I make sure that I listen to what my body will allow each day. It's definitely a test of not letting the ego and frustration take over - a fantastic lesson to accept where I'm at right now, be gentle to myself and to enjoy the journey.

I had originally thought – I'm pretty flexible and fit, surely it won't be the hard to stay active and agile. Boy, I was wrong. In the third trimester I still ended up feeling like a contortionist every time I tried to wipe my ass on the toilet, and I still feel like my stomach is being pushed out of my mouth and my lungs are squeezed into submission every time I need to put shoes on.... I still have to roll myself out of bed and off the couch ungracefully, and sometimes after sitting for long periods of time, I still waddle like a penguin when I get up and walk around. I still had periods where going for a short walk would leave me breathless, and where my heart rate would race even when I wasn't doing anything to justify it. I often think how hard it must be for those that don't have a sufficient base level of fitness to work with – if it's hard for me, then I can understand why a lot of pregnant women just don't leave the couch as the effort is too extreme.

It's interesting how strangers change the way they look at you when you're pregnant. For the first 4-5 months they're too afraid to say anything just in case you've been eating too many cakes instead of actually being pregnant. Then once it becomes obvious, it's almost like they can be scared of you. I've had people recoil from me when they go to push past in a busy rest room or street and then they realise that you're "infected". Some women look at you in pity, others get all gushy. Either way you end up having this label over your head. You become "the pregnant woman", not just another face in the crowd. You're no longer a no body – you're one of "those" people. As for people who do know you, all they can talk about is pregnancy and babies. You can't escape it! It becomes the only interesting thing that seems to exist in your life. I guess because it is one of the biggest life changes you will ever go through, and when you think about it, it is pretty extreme. And everyone who's a step ahead of you wants to give their words of wisdom. Some of its helpful, some of it's annoying. Especially the horror stories about traumatic labours, unsettled or sick babies causing sleepless nights, endless hours of crying and insanity, and the agony of cracked nipples – I have to remind

myself that everyone's experiences are different and there's no point worrying about something that hasn't happened yet. Deal with it if and when it happens I guess!

Throughout the pregnancy, doctor's visits gradually changed from every 4-6 weeks of general check-ups (blood pressure, weight, measuring the belly, listening to the baby's heart beat with the fetal doppler), to every 2<sup>nd</sup> week, then every week near the end. I had a pap smear near the beginning which was pretty traumatic. Blood cells are pretty sensitive and quite close to the surface when you're pregnant so I bled a lot and it was painful. Further down the track I had a flu shot, and even further down the track I had a whooping cough vaccination. Had a few blood tests and discovered that I was close to being iron deficient. Did the glucose test where you have to drink liquid that tastes like flat lemonade with almost 30 teaspoons of sugar in it to determine if I was developing gestational diabetes. At 38 weeks I provided a urine sample to test for pre-eclampsia (seriously though, how do you aim for a cup when you can't even see your vagina! I just closed my eyes and hoped for the best haha), and a vaginal swab to test for GBS. Luckily all clear for everything. The doctor said that I was having a pregnancy that seemed to follow everything by the book. I guess that's a good thing, no complications!

Around the 30 week mark my husband and I attended an antenatal class at the hospital. I found it really helpful learning all about the mechanics of child birth, the different situations that arise, the pain relief options, as well as what to expect once baby arrives, and breast feeding tips. We got a tour of the birthing suites so we could get mentally prepared for the big day. It was interesting seeing all of the other women at different stages of their pregnancy and comparing bumps – I honestly felt like a whale as I was so much bigger than other women who were further along in the pregnancy than I was! I think it may just be the way the baby's sitting though as opposed to overall size.... (I hope!). We were also told that from 20 weeks, our nipples would already be able to produce colostrum (the substance before milk comes through). We were told to have a play (not during class of course) and I discovered that one breast worked fine and the other was broken. Shit! (After more manipulation, it turns out the other works fine, it's just a little slow to come through.) We were also told that the energy output of giving birth is the equivalent to running a marathon. My husband just happens to be running a marathon 10 days before my due date and if I ever complain about my upcoming labour, he kindly reminds me that he's going to go through the same thing himself. Pffft, yea right!

I had a few moments throughout the antenatal class where I felt numb – like I wasn't sure if I was going to be able to endure what I had gotten myself into, and that I felt no connection to the baby inside me. Becoming a parent is pretty overwhelming and life will never be the same – do I really want this?! And labour itself... traumatic and disgusting, or beautiful?! But then it would swing in roundabouts to waves of extreme love and being super excited about the journey, and not being able to wait to find out what kind of person it's going to be and what it's going to look like...

Around 36 weeks I had my baby shower. Seeing as Australia isn't my home country I was a bit sad that I wasn't going to have all of my family and long term friends there. My Nana was making the trip over from NZ though which I was excited about, and then to my surprise, my mum and brother turned up too which made it a very special weekend. I was completely overwhelmed by everyone's generosity with their gifts. My sister and brother in law had given us so much that they no longer needed as well, as their youngest is now 2 years old. My husband and I feel incredibly grateful that we've barely had to buy anything at all for the baby. The rooms now all set up and ready to go! It's been quite a learning curve trying to figure out what we need, and what all of the things on the "needed list" actually are! The options out there are seriously overwhelming and the prices can be

extortionate. Having baby stuff all around the house certainly makes it feel real, along with the huge tummy of course!

Once I reached the third trimester the reality of having to endure labour really began to loom. I've ranged from extreme fear to complete bravado. Fear of the unknown is a powerful thing, but its undeniable, the baby has to come out somehow, there's no turning back now. Suck it up princess. At the beginning I felt a bit bitter that I had to be the one to go through it and that my husband didn't, but I guess that's not his fault! Eventually it changed to acceptance, and even a small part of me feels lucky that I get to experience it. It must be hard for men to watch their loved one in pain and not be able to do anything to help, and they don't have all the crazy hormones pumping through them that the female has to manage with the stress. And afterwards, the baby needs the mother (& her body) more than the father, so the men must feel a bit useless for a while. I couldn't imagine going through it without my husband though, he's going to be the one that helps keep me together through the whole process, including adjusting to being a parent. We're a team!

It helps to remember that there are thousands of women who go through labour every day, and we are very lucky in the western world these days that it is rare for a woman to lose her life to child birth. It's easy to let yourself be consumed by fear of all the things that could go wrong though, and fear that the pain will be unbearable, that the physical damage may be severe (like ripping through to the anus, oh god), that it may take forever, or be too quick, and fear that there might be something wrong with the baby when it arrives. It's also easy to let fear creep in about being a parent, about not being able to handle the responsibility, about resenting the child and having post-natal depression, about being a bad parent and screwing them up, or losing the child to an illness or accident.... Then there's the fear of embarrassment during labour as well – of shitting yourself, of being too loud and sounding like a wild animal, of looking ridiculous on all fours or squatting, of being out of control – and disgust with all the fluid, blood and placenta mess... what if my husband never looks at my vagina the same?! What if my vagina and stomach never goes back to normal!? All those thoughts cross through the mind.

But most of the time I feel at peace with it all and prepared to take each moment as it comes instead of worrying about a future that cannot be controlled. I'm curious as to what it will be like and curious to see how I handle it. The book 'Birth Skills' has helped. It points out that labour is a healthy pain (just a muscle working, it's not an injury) and the women's body is designed to do it. It outlines ways that you can handle the pain naturally – by keeping active and focusing on other things to distract the neural pathways from the pain. It is very tempting to opt for an epidural early and ride it out, but I don't want to be confined to a bed unless absolutely necessary. I have moments where I even look forward to giving birth! Mainly to finally meet our baby of course (and to finally not being pregnant. I feel like I've been pregnant FOREVER. 9 months is a really long time! Let's get this over and done with already!).

The last couple of months of work was a struggle. The tiredness was the biggest factor, it didn't take much for the energy levels to become depleted. Even cleaning the house made me feel like I had gone for a run and I was a zombie afterwards. The days dragged painfully and I found it difficult to stay motivated. I was down to only a few outfits that I could still fit and all I wanted to do was stay in my pyjamas on the couch all day. I would say that I'm very lucky and I've had a very easy pregnancy as I still sleep perfectly fine (only getting up once a night to pee) and haven't had any terrible fluid retention or extreme discomfort or back pain, but I still feel a lot of other pain – although its bearable and never constant. Mainly ligament pain around my groin and a painful tail bone ache if I sit too long. It's at its worse in when I get up to pee in the night, or when I first get up in the morning. Sometimes after going to the toilet I'll have an extreme ache like period pains and I think



maybe the labour's starting, but then it goes away. At 38 weeks I'm starting to get sore hips and shoulders after sleeping on my side all night (I can't wait to be able to sleep on my back again!). The pressure on my pubic bone and bladder is pretty extreme now so walking too far isn't fun anymore. Sometimes it feels like the baby is trying to stick its hand out of my cervix which can be a very shocking and uncomfortable experience!

Finally I am on maternity leave and I am focusing on making the most of every second. I am enjoying relaxation and freedom while I still have it! Although I am fighting feelings of cabin fever already... as long as I can get outside each day then I feel happy with the world. I range from not wanting to be confined to the couch to not wanting to leave it all... It's amazing how quickly the time fly's by now and all the days start blurring into one. I feel like a ticking time bomb, never sure when it's about to go off. I'm weary of how far I stray from the house just in case it starts and happens to progress really quickly, and then there's the concern that my water might break in an inconvenient location (like all over someone's carpet or couch, or at the supermarket!). Not having a due date locked in and confirmed also makes it difficult to plan the logistics of getting my mum here in time from QLD. I'm just grateful that bub didn't decide to arrive before I had finished work as I'm far too much of a control freak to have handled leaving behind unfinished business!

I'm fairly sold on the fact I'm having a boy. I would love to have either though of course, but I will be incredibly surprised if it turns out to be a girl. Being the organised control freak that I am, I didn't think I would be able to cope with not knowing and not being prepared for either or, but I've actually surprised myself. The most commonly asked question I've come across throughout the whole pregnancy is whether or not we knew what we were having, and it's interesting how divided everyone is as to whether waiting is the best way to go or not. I am very much looking forward to the surprise, it will be pretty special after everything I've gone through, but I still believe that for a second child (if there is one, I'm definitely not in any rush to be pregnant again any time soon!), I would want to find out early to be prepared for two of the same or not. The one thing I have struggled with the most is having to call the baby IT. So impersonal, like it's just a thing and not a real person. Luckily my husband and I didn't have any issues picking a boy and girls name, we actually decided on them really early and very quickly.

So now it's just a waiting game. 1.5 weeks to go and counting. I feel like I've gone through every emotion and thought every thought. It's been one hell of a roller coaster ride. I've enjoyed it, even though I've hated it at times and wanted it to be over. It's a strange thing to dislike something yet not wanting to change a thing at the same time. And as for the labour – now that will be another story. To be continued.....!