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# CLARE

## MY SIENNA'S A LITTLE MIRACLE

ITV weather girl Clare Nasir believes acupuncture helped her conceive after battling fertility problems. She talks to **Gabrielle Fagan** about her difficult pregnancy and her new life as a mum

**C**lare Nasir thought the outlook seemed fair when she landed her dream job in television, and contentedly believed that one day a family would complete her happiness. But her path to motherhood has been fraught with difficulty – at one stage she feared she would never have children – and after she had a “miracle” baby she had to endure the anguish of watching her daughter fight for life.

“It’s certainly taught me that you never know what life will throw at you,” says Nasir (41), now reporting the weather for ITV and who was formerly weather producer and presenter at GMTV for 10 years.

“In my early thirties I was a career girl through and through and thought I’d just have children, pop them in nursery while I worked and my life would just sail on. I think it’s an understatement to say it didn’t quite work out like that!”

The attractive, vivacious brunette is sitting chatting at her home that she shares with her husband, DJ Chris Hawkins, and their longed-for child, Sienna (2) and recalling the years of painful treatment for her gynaecological problems and her struggle with fertility.

Diagnosed in 2000 with multiple and unusually large fibroids (growths in the uterus), she endured increasing pain and weight gain for years until she had treatment to shrink them.

“I ended up having three operations – eventually I had to have a tumour, originally the size of a rugby ball, surgically removed.

“Ironically, even though my heart was breaking inside because I thought I’d never get pregnant, people assumed that I was having a baby because my stomach was so swollen.

“Luckily, I was able to avoid a hysterectomy and was finally given the news that it was possible I could one day have a family.”

After she met and married Hawkins (35) in 2005, the couple tried immediately for a baby but after two years turned to fertility treatment.

“I was really worried because I’m older than Chris and he was just as keen as me for us to have a family,” she says.

After three lots of failed IUI (where the man’s sperm is injected into the uterus) they turned to in-vitro fertilisation (IVF), which failed at the first attempt in 2008.

“I was completely devastated. It’s such a deep instinctive need to have a baby and it



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can become an obsession when you keep failing. It was a very difficult time for both of us," she says.

"I'd had years of treatment for the fibroids and then in one year I had three IUI treatments and the IVF and my body had been bombarded with drugs. I was feeling at rock bottom both emotionally and physically."

But a chance encounter with acupuncturist Bernard Nolan, she believes, was a turning point.

"I met him at a launch party and he impressed me with his calm, gentle manner and confidence that I could be helped," says Nasir, who is supporting the first Acupuncture Awareness Week, which runs this Monday to Sunday.

"Bernard told me my body resembled a battlefield after all it had gone through with so many drugs and operations. He suggested acupuncture could open up all the energy channels in my body, and regulate the blood flow in my system.

"That would, he hoped, help the uterus to perform in a more healthy way and enhance my chances of conception."

It's estimated that one in seven couples experience problems conceiving, and there are around 33,000 cycles of IVF carried out in Britain every year, which has an average 15% success rate.

Medical opinion is divided on the benefits of acupuncture but there have been studies suggesting that the ancient Chinese practice, where fine disposable needles are inserted on points along certain meridians, may enhance a woman's chance of conception.

Nasir had a combination of shiatsu, finger-pressure therapy, and acupuncture, with needles placed in her feet, legs and arms, over three months, going three times a week.

"I had so little faith in anything working that I'd even filled in adoption forms so that we could take that route," recalls Nasir.

"So after years of emotional ups and downs, I couldn't believe it when after the second IVF I took a pregnancy test and it was positive. I cried with joy.

"I believe acupuncture was key because it both relaxed me and made me feel that I could do something to help my body. That boosted me mentally as it made me feel more in control."

Throughout it all, she was supported by her best friend, TV presenter and mother-of-

two Kate Garraway, now godmother to her daughter.

"She was wonderful and so understanding when I got down and constantly picked me up off the floor on the many times when I'd despair that I'd never be a mother."

Clare's pregnancy joy was shortlived as a string of problems meant constant worry and scans. She gave birth to Sienna on November 11, 2009, two months before her due date.

"It was touch and go when Sienna was born. She was only four pounds in weight, with breathing problems, and had to be kept in intensive care for six weeks," she says.

"On several occasions she stopped breathing in my arms and went blue. It was such an anxious time and I couldn't even bear to contemplate losing her. But she battled through and being able to take her home a week before Christmas was the most wonderful, magic moment.

"She's a lovely, feisty, funny little girl now and every day feels like Christmas since I've been home with her.

"I wake up every morning and think, 'I love being a mum' – it's the thing that makes my life whole and good whereas before I was really just driven by my career. So it's totally altered my outlook."

Nasir works part-time for ITV and last year released a successful fitness DVD showing how she regained her size 6 figure – she's 5ft – after going up to a size 16 following her pregnancy.

"I'm not sure whether we'll have any more children," she says.

"Chris is a natural father and would love another and so would I really, but I also dread another pregnancy after what I went through.

"Of course, it would be lovely if it happened naturally but we have some embryos frozen so we will probably have one more try and have one implanted at some point.

"If we do try for another pregnancy, I would definitely have acupuncture to complement any treatment. Without that I might not have my lovely little girl."

*For more information on acupuncture, visit [introducingacupuncture.co.uk](http://introducingacupuncture.co.uk) or [bernardnolan.com](http://bernardnolan.com)*



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**COMPLETE FAMILY:** Clare and Mark with little Sienna and (below) the couple during the pregnancy



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