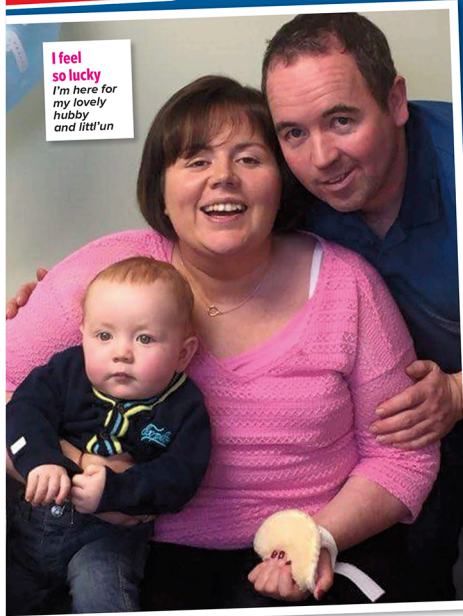


I feel so lucky I'm here for my lovely hubby and litt'un



I GAVE BIRTH IN A COMA



While I lay sleeping...

Waking up, I discovered I'd become a mum!

By Ciara Murray, 33, from Enniskillen



I'd just stepped out of the shower and wrapped my wet hair in a towel when a sudden feeling of sickness washed over me.

The joys of pregnancy! I thought to myself, looking down and passing down a protective hand over my bump.

I was 37 weeks pregnant with my first baby, and me and my husband John, 36, were so excited to welcome our little boy.

John and I had met in a nightclub 14 years ago, and enjoyed a brilliant life together, with holidays and weekends away, before finally tying the knot and deciding to start a family.

My pregnancy had gone smoothly, so I didn't give the

nausea too much thought. I'll just go for a lie down in the bedroom for a while, I thought. But suddenly my head was spinning and my knees gave way. I desperately grabbed for the

I was paralysed, couldn't even lift my head...

bed, but missed, and ended up sprawled on my bedroom floor. Terrified I'd hurt the baby, I tried to move. But I was paralysed, couldn't even lift my head.

It was only 11am, and John, a builder, wasn't due home until dinnertime.

Those were the longest seven hours of my life. I vomited several times, and I could hear my mobile phone ringing from the other room, but there was

just no way I could reach it. And one thing was truly terrifying me – I hadn't felt the baby kick since I'd fallen.

By the time I heard John's key in the front door at 6.30pm, I was barely conscious.

'Is that you?' I croaked, realising that my speech sounded slurred. 'I'm in here.'

John was at my side in a moment. We'd just finished decorating our house, and I remember apologising that I'd made a mess of the wallpaper.

'Stuff the wallpaper,' said John, turning white. 'I'm calling an ambulance.'

I was rushed to our local hospital in Enniskillen, where medics immediately did a CT scan on my brain, and a scan to check on the baby.

'I'm afraid you've suffered a massive stroke,' a doctor told me

gravely. 'We're going to transfer you to the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast, straightaway.'

This was more than 80 miles from our home, so I knew I was in trouble.

'I think it's really serious,' I said to John, bursting into tears – and that's the last thing I remember.

I was unconscious when I got to hospital, and doctors took John and my mum into a side room.

When I woke up, 10 days had passed!

'Welcome back,' said the nurse as my eyes opened.

She told me it was 10 November. 'That's my husband's birthday,' I replied.

'Well remembered,' she said. 'I think you're ready to meet your baby.'

Yes, I'd given birth in a coma. John was fighting back the tears as he brought our perfect little boy James to me and gently laid him on my chest for a cuddle.

'He looks just like you,' I said.

John told me that, while I was out of it, doctors had discovered a huge blood clot on my brain.

They'd delivered James by Caesarean, then operated on me to remove the clot.

I'd been in an induced coma in Intensive Care to let the swelling on my brain go down.

'We thought we

might lose you,' John told me. Doctors had told him that if I did wake up, I might not be the same girl he married.

With my precious newborn in my arms and my loving hubby looking on, I vowed I'd do my best to get back there.

But we weren't out of the woods yet. The stroke had affected the left side of my body, leaving me with absolutely no movement in my arm, and very little in my leg.

I couldn't even raise myself up in bed without slumping down to one side. It was terrifying.

I was moved to a specialist stroke ward, then spent several more months in a hospital closer to home, before finally being admitted to a specialist

rehabilitation unit at Musgrave Park Hospital, back in Belfast.

There, I had to learn to do everything again – simple things you take for granted, like washing, dressing, and making a cuppa.

I even learned how to change a nappy with one hand!

'Quite a party trick!' I laughed.

I was an in-patient in the week, allowed home on weekends.

Leaving John and James on a Sunday night and going back to hospital for more gruelling rehab was so hard.

John and I both cried buckets as he drove me back to the unit, though he brought James to visit me every single day.

Finally, six months after my

Now I've learned how to change a nappy with one hand!

PLUS Strokes and pregnancy

A stroke is a serious, life-threatening condition that happens when the blood supply to part of the brain is cut off. Pregnant women are 13 times more likely to have a stroke than non-pregnant women of the same age. However, the risk of stroke in young women is small, and strokes in pregnancy and childbirth are still rare. It has been estimated that a stroke during pregnancy affects eight out of every 100,000 women.

For more information, see stroke.org.uk



A grin from James!