

I'm Helena and I'm a Medical English teacher and Registered Nurse in the UK.

I interview English speakers about their health to help you become more familiar with the language used to talk about different medical topics.

My aim is to build your confidence in interactions with your English-speaking patients and healthcare colleagues.

Welcome to English Practice for Healthcare.

I have asked people to speak slower than usual but the best thing about this podcast is the real language you will hear.

Depending on your English level it could be helpful to read whilst you listen and transcripts for each episode can be found on my website [www.englishpracticeforhealthcare.com](http://www.englishpracticeforhealthcare.com).

The language is probably most suitable for intermediate English learners and above, however a challenge is always good so whatever your level, I hope you will enjoy this opportunity to hear these natural conversations about personal health experiences. Ok, let's get started!

What symptoms might be experienced by a woman during pregnancy?

And does morning sickness only last the morning?

In this second episode I speak to Olga, a 32-year-old female living in Sheffield, a city in the North of England. During her pregnancy Olga was diagnosed with Hyperemesis Gravidarum. The abbreviation of this condition is HGV so that's a little bit more easy to say. She describes how this affected her and how she coped with it.

In English, the verb 'to be sick' has two meanings. It can mean to be ill, which means the same as to be unwell or poorly. For example, 'I think I've got flu, I've got a fever, I'm really sick. This is why we have the phrasal verb 'off sick', which means being unable to go to work because you are ill.

The second meaning is the same as 'to vomit' or 'throw up'. So, you will hear Olga say how sometimes she felt sick, but she wasn't actually sick. This means she felt nauseas, but she didn't actually vomit. So, in English if you hear someone say 'I'm going to be sick' then you should move out the way! Or if you're at work then try and get them a sick bowl or something they can be sick into.

So, two questions to help you focus your listening so:

What things did Olga say made her feel sick?

Why did she go to the GP?

And remember you can listen to the audio as many times as you like, you can pause it whenever you like, and you could even put it to a slower speed to listen. There are some moments when Olga speaks quite fast and our speech overlaps, which means we speak at the same time but ok, lets listen!

Ok so, hi Olga

Hi Helena

How are you?

Yeah, good thankyou

Good, ok are you sitting comfortably?

Yeah I'm comfy enough although its quite difficult given how pregnant I am

I did notice you were pregnant

How many weeks are you?

I'm 40 weeks and 4 days

Well of course I noticed you were pregnant because that's what we're talking about today, your uh pregnancy, and some of the symptoms that you had throughout your pregnancy but first can I ask you where are you from?

I'm from Sheffield

Sheffield. Where's that?

Uhhh so that's in the north of England sort of nearest like big city is Manchester that most people know about but I recently moved back here from London

Okay and so what's Sheffield like? As a city

Ummm it's really hilly lots of greenery and really near to the peak district which is like one of the national parks in England

Lovely and is there an accent in Sheffield

Yeah, so it depends there's like different accents for different areas of Sheffield but there is a bit of a Northern accent maybe not as Northern an accent as other places further North in England but yeah you can hear that we don't speak the queens English in Sheffield

And do you have an accent have you been told you have an accent

Yeah I think I've got an accent

Your baby is due any moment, is that right?

Yeah yeah, so my due date was four days ago and now like in England you can wait around two weeks um overdue and then they'll like either induce you or choose a different course of action

Ok

Yeah

Have you had an appointment with your midwife?

Uh yeah so I had an appointment on the due date umm where they did like test my blood pressure, urine, bloods that kind of thing and because everything's still fine I was, I'm able to like continue and just see if the baby still comes naturally

Ok

Or whether I need to uh have an induction but because the hospitals here so busy you actually have to book in for an induction

Right

Quite early on so that's booked for like a few days' time just in case

Right, wow, and is it your first?

Yeah, first baby

First baby

Ok if I can take you back to when you first found out you were pregnant umm how did you, how did you find out?

Ummm I found out in January just after my 32<sup>nd</sup> birthday and basically just because my period was late and I knew just because my periods are like regular that meant something and I'd also been feeling sick that day straight away so then I just did a pregnancy test uh which came back positive so yeah went from there

Ok, so you took a test because your period was late

Yeah

Did you just take one test or...

Yeah I just did one test I was down in London that day and I decided to get the test whilst I was down in London because the pharmacy near me has like no stock ever so I just got the test and then I did the test on the train on the way back to Sheffield

You did the test on the train?

Yeah well on the train from Doncaster to Sheffield and then my boyfriend picked me up from the station um in his van so then I gave him the test when I got in the van

Um so you'd been trying for a baby?

Umm only for like a few weeks

Wow

Yeah so we were quite Rob was really excited that's my partner but I was quite shocked I think um that it happened so quickly because I was thinking it would take more like 9 months to a year

Mmmm

So yeah it was a bit of a surprise

Um and so you you said you felt sick that day?

Yeah so I felt sick on like the first day my period was late and then to be honest throughout the rest well until about 32 weeks had um had really bad nausea like sometimes actually being sick but most of the time just feeling really sick

Right so that was from day one like the day that you found out you were pregnant you started with the nausea and the morning sickness but was it just in the morning? How long did it...

No, even though it's called morning sickness apparently it can be like all day

Mmm

So it would be like on and off throughout the day even like having a shower would make me feel sick or looking at screens so luckily at work they were really understanding so I could just like take an hour to lie down or whatever and then go back to work cos I work from home um so that was ok but yeah basically like anything could make me feel sick there was no real specific triggers

Mm so not just smells

No

Or foods?

It would be like movements it was almost like travel sickness

Oh

But yeah then I got it also from some foods some smells yeah and like really anything to be honest so

Had you had travel sickness before?

Yeah but only mild like when I was a kid

Right

So, yeah but yeah it got pretty bad once I was pregnant

Ok, so um ok how did that affect uh you then in your day-to-day life?

Well basically I couldn't really go running anymore or do sport, which is like what I spend a lot of my time doing

Mm mm

Umm I was only just really getting through work

Right

Ummm eating I was just I was actually able to eat but it was just complete rubbish that I was eating like carbs

Mmm

Crisps, bread, crackers, you know nothing like healthy like what you imagine you would eat when you're pregnant

Yeah

Um, yeah

So you were craving quite bland tasting things?

Yeah, yeah exactly

And before you were fit and healthy you really liked running

Yeah

Yeah but you weren't able to do that cos it made your sickness worse

Yeah it made me sick and also I would just get so tired from even a little bit of exercise at the start

Mmmm

Um but in the end I think I gave it up in like week 7

Mmm

And by the time I felt re-energised it was probably too late to go back to running because I was probably 5 months or six months pregnant

Wow

So by then I think I would have been too heavy almost really to run

Mmm so did you just try and manage it yourself at the beginning then?

Yeah

These symptoms

So I was asking all my friends who'd previously been pregnant and they were just telling me like ohh its just a normal part of pregnancy everything you read online just says its normal symptom

Mmm

Or if your being sick a lot then go to the GP

Right

But then when I went for my 20 week scan they were I was actually being sick during the scan

Mmmm

And so they were like ok we think you know there's a problem you should go to the GP

Right

And so I went to the GP and she was actually so nice I started crying in front of her

Awwww

Yeah and um she she gave me some medication which it like helped a bit it meant I could get through days and stuff

Right

Um like I could still work and stuff I just had to take rests

Mm mm

Umm she offered to sign me off work but because my work had been so understanding I didn't feel like under pressure to make that decision then so I just decided to wait

Mm mm

So yeah she gave me this medication kind of managed with that until about 32 weeks

Right

And then it got better

And so you were actually on anti-sickness medication

Yeah their like ant-histamines

Oh right

Cos I think I don't know the science behind it but I think its like your body's having some sort of reaction to the hormones

Ohhh

Almost like an allergic reaction

Oh, right

Yeah

Did they say how common it is at all? Did they say....

Ummm I don't think so, I think there's a few people who have to go into hospital cos they're actually being sick

Mmm mmm

Theres a lot of people that get a bit of sickness but it finishes around 12 weeks

Mm mm

And I was just somewhere in the middle

Mm mm

So yeah I don't know if its common or not

Was there any time that you did worry that you might have to go to hospital?

Ummm not really but there was a lot of times when I thought this just can't be normal

Mmm

Because I think that I'm like quite tough with being sick

Yeah

Or being ill and so I knew that if all other women felt like this a lot more would be off work during their pregnancy

Yeah, yeah

And you would hear a lot more about it so yeah

Mmmm yeah its not really uh talked about that much is it

No like cos your not actually sick I feel like people don't really get it that much

Yeah

Or they just think that its just normal morning sickness

Mm mm

But if you feel so sick you can't even like sh you know the shower makes you feel sick or looking at your phone

Mmmm

It's probably quite extreme

Mmm mm so what did you do to try and get through it then?

I don't know I just, well the medication did help so that was like at maybe 21 weeks I got that

Mm mm

Helped a bit and then just ate things that I fancied or like had cravings for that I felt would make me feel better

Mm mm

Took breaks during the day at work I don't know

Mmm mm yeah umm so has it felt like a long pregnancy then?

Yes, yes cos I feel like other people don't understand why I don't like being pregnant or why I wasn't excited to be pregnant but sometimes if you feel like that day in, day out

Yeah

It's pretty difficult to get excited about stuff because you're just concentrating on getting through that day, I think

Yeah yeah

So, yeah

Umm so what and what made it worse? So, you've said looking at your screen and having a shower, was there anything else surprising that made it worse for you?

Watching TV

Yeah

Coffee, like being in the car

Mm mm

Umm and then I had some cravings for things which did help, which were quite weird, like sweets, you know, like hard boiled sweets really helped, um and everybody tells you to eat ginger, but I needed like super strength ginger or something that wasn't working for me, so yeah. I dunno

(laughing)

I can't think of anything else that made it worse

So, Olga told us she felt sick from the very first moment she was pregnant. So the first thing we were listening for, what things made it worse? She mentioned how having shower and looking at screens, so her phone screen or her computer screen for example made her feel sick:

*So it would be like on and off throughout the day even like having a shower would make me feel sick or looking at screens so luckily at work they were really understanding so I could just like take an hour to lie down*

When Olga says 'on and off' she means it wasn't constant. Sometimes she felt sick, sometimes she didn't. Someone might also say 'on and off' to describe their pain. You might ask 'is the pain there all the time?' and they could answer 'no, it's on and off'.

Movements could also make her feel sick, so she couldn't do the exercise that she normally enjoyed doing. Also, some foods and some smells made it worse. She got through this by eating 'rubbish':

*I was actually able to eat but it was just complete rubbish I was eating like carbs, crisps, bread, crackers, you know nothing like healthy like what you imagine you would eat when you're pregnant*

in English in this context 'rubbish' describes unhealthy foods. Bland foods, which means foods without much taste.

Olga also mentioned, being in the car, watching TV and coffee.

So, the second thing, Olga went to the GP in the end because when she went for her 20-week scan of the baby, she was being physically sick. The medics at that appointment advised her to see her GP and at this appointment you heard how she was prescribed a type of anti-sickness medication.

In the next section listen to what Olga says about the amount of research into this condition? Is what she is saying fact or her opinion?

So did you have to have any extra appointments or anything?

No, nothing

No

I just had my regular appointments and I think because they were normal

Yeah

And I wasn't actually vomiting and I was still able to eat, there wasn't that much they could do

Yeah, yeah. What about drinking water?

Yeah that helped

Was that something you could manage?

Yeah, I could drink water

Mm mm

So yeah, it actually helped a bit, like sipping, like cold water

Mmm

Oh and eating like raw vegetables

Oh right

I think it's because it's just really plain, you know, like carrot sticks and celery and stuff like that seem to help

And you were pregnant throughout the summer as well

Yeah

Um so what about the temperature? Did that make it worse?

Yeah, it made it worse, but it was okay by that stage, I was a bit further on I was more like in the 32, 33 weeks

Mm mm

So, um so it wasn't too bad and I could just lay inside with a fan

Yeah, yeah try and keep cool um and what are the normal appointments that you have then?  
So, you said you just had your appointments as normal. So what?

You have one at 12 weeks

Yeah

I think you have one as soon as you find out you're pregnant actually

Mmm mm

One at 12 weeks, one at 20 weeks, which is where you get told the gender

Mm mm

In the UK, you can also pay to get additional scans to find the gender out earlier and then, I think you have one like every four, five weeks until you get to about 30 weeks and then it's a bit more regular, like every three weeks

Right

Yeah

Right and that's with the midwife?

Yeah, just with the midwife

So, other than umm this sickness, and does it actually have a name? This

Uh yeah, I think it's called hyperemesis or HGV

Okay

Yeah

Umm so HGV or hyperemesis. So, other than your HGV, did you have any other symptoms things that were new that came along with being pregnant?

Um probably just more normal symptoms like quite extreme well, tiredness, heartburn

Oh heartburn

Umm what was the other things I was thinking of

Had you had heartburn before?

No never had it before

What does that feel like?

Just like, just like burning in your chest and throat

But um I didn't get too many aches and pains to be fair like I haven't had much backache or anything like that

Mmm mm

Obviously you have weight gain

Mmm

Umm and a lot of my friends had bad like digestion, like diarrhoea, constipation things like that

Mmm

Feel like I've had loads of stuff and now I can't remember it

(laughing)

I think the HGV is enough really isn't it

Yeah

But the heartburn that's interesting was that after you ate too much or just kind of from nowhere?

Ummm a lot of people get it when they're pregnant cos of the size of the baby

Ahhh

Is like shoving everything upwards

Right

So yeah but I get it if like I have like caffeine or

Mm mm

Or really sweet food

Mmm mm

That kind of thing

Um and the HGV did they tell you did they have an explanation for you at all were they able to explain why

Um no I also had iron deficiency so I don't know if that's more likely to make you have HGV but they didn't really have any reason as to why

Mmm mm

In fact well this is just like anecdotal but I was quite surprised like throughout pregnancy how little science or research has gone into anything cos obviously like pregnant women they don't really test or um do any research on them so there's just

Mmm mm

Yeah there doesn't seem to be any like background on why you can get certain symptoms or

Yeah

Things like that so I think the iron deficiency probably meant I was really tired and breathless a lot

Yeah

But I don't, I still don't know why I got the HGV

Yeah so there's nothing that means that you're or one person, one person is more prone to it than another person it's just

They couldn't tell no they didn't do any tests or anything

So, its just bad luck really

(laugh) yeah, exactly

Ah well thank you so much for sharing

No problem

Your experience with us and um good luck for the last few days of your pregnancy

Ah thanks Helena

Thanks Olga

See you, bye

Bye

Ok great, so when Olga spoke about the amount of research into HGV she said she was 'surprised' how little research there is. She felt this was because they don't really do tests on pregnant women. Even though Olga used the word 'obviously' and what she is saying could well be true. Here she is still presenting an opinion. She presented her observation using herself as the subject 'I was quite surprised' so we know it's her opinion. And addi.. difficult word additionally, the word anecdotal means information not based on actual facts.

*In fact, well this is just like anecdotal but I was quite surprised like throughout pregnancy how little science or research has gone into anything cos like obviously like pregnant women they don't really test or um do any research on them*

It certainly sounds like Olga had a difficult pregnancy. She was lucky she didn't have to go to hospital to receive fluids as she was still able to sip water and stay fairly hydrated. Some women with this condition may have to go to hospital for treatment. I've put a link in the episode description to the NHS website where you can read more about HGV. The NHS website is reliable information as it comes from the National Health Service in the UK. I have used this myself as an information source both if I've been unwell and working as a nurse cos it gives some useful background knowledge.

Great, I really hope you have enjoyed this episode and have learnt some new expressions and vocabulary. Please recommend it to other English students, particularly healthcare workers and any questions remember you can email me at [helena@englishpracticeforhealthcare.com](mailto:helena@englishpracticeforhealthcare.com) and visit my website [www.englishpracticeforhealthcare.com](http://www.englishpracticeforhealthcare.com), there is a link in the description of this episode.

Thank you for listening! Happy English practice, excellent work. Please look out for the next episode to hear more natural English language input! Thank you goodbye!