

NATALIE'S TB STORY: PREGNANT AND IN PAIN

“Natalie, a young mum with two young children, was relieved when she was told she had renal (kidney) TB, because she finally knew what was wrong with her and that it could be cured.

“While pregnant with my first son, James, I started getting kidney pains. At first the hospital thought it was appendicitis. I was in hospital for a week, but when nothing was found I was told it was pregnancy related and sent home with Paracetamol for the pain. After James was born, I kept getting what they thought were urinary infections. They gave me antibiotics, but it didn't seem to make me any better. When I was pregnant with Thomas two years later, I went into hospital again with kidney problems. They said it was pregnancy related again.

“By this time I could hardly walk. I was scared the doctors wouldn't believe me. The nurse was the only one who listened. I said 'I know my body. I know there is something wrong. It shouldn't hurt this much.' It was the nurse who eventually tested me for TB; she didn't even know it could be somewhere other than lungs, but she had tested me for everything else and a doctor she knew suggested TB. She said you've had BCG so you won't have TB. But I did.

“Finally knowing I had TB was in some ways a relief; at least it was curable.”

“I was told I had TB in my kidneys, when I asked what would happen to me, they said that it was curable.



So, I didn't panic, thinking that I would die or anything, I just got on with it. Finally knowing I had TB was in some ways a relief; at least it was curable.

“I was on my antibiotics for six months altogether. I found it really hard taking my medication. I don't like taking tablets at all and I didn't like the side effects. I felt sick, got heart burn and a rash all over my face. And I had this horrible smell that I couldn't get rid of. I thought my house smelt. I disinfected everything. But it turned out only I could smell it.

“A few times I would think 'today I won't bother to take them' but then I would look at my kids and think, 'no, I've got to', because my doctors had told me that if you don't take all the medication you are more at risk of your TB not being cured.

“You know, you don't get TB from being poor; you don't get it for any other reason than you just happen to get it – that's just life. But it is curable, that's the main thing, because a lot of people think you die from it, straight away. But you don't obviously. I'm still here!