



Pregnant with the quads

After several miscarriages, Karissa was overwhelmed with grief. Then, she decided to try for a baby one last time...



Holding my boys for the first time



We felt so blessed



We had to get a minivan

For the LOVE of QUAD!

Handing over the pregnancy test to my partner Dillon, I watched as a smile spread across his face.

'We're pregnant?' he asked. It was early on in our relationship, but we knew we wanted kids.

At 12 weeks along, we went to the first scan.

As the sonographer ran the Doppler over my belly, he smiled. 'Looks like you're having twins!' he revealed.

We were shocked but excited. The pregnancy was going well but while we were on a camping trip, my waters broke.

I'm only 20 weeks, I panicked.

At hospital, the doctor gave me some worrying news.

'You're in premature labour and you have an infection,' he revealed.

My heart sank.

I just knew that the babies wouldn't survive.

My first boy, Lucas, was stillborn and my second son, Ryan, lived for only a few minutes.

Dillon and I were utterly devastated.

We already had a memorial garden at home dedicated to my brother Kurt, who sadly passed away aged 19.

So we planted a pine tree next to it for the twins and engraved a rock with their names on.

Battling through the grief was

overwhelming.

But I still longed for a baby.

A few months later, we decided to start trying again.

I fell pregnant quickly and found out we were expecting a little boy.

This time, I was closely monitored.

I was overjoyed when our son Tyler came into the world, weighing 6lb 12oz.

'He's perfect,' I cooed, cradling him.

He was a wonderful child and helped us heal.

Around Tyler's second birthday, I fell pregnant again.

During the seven-week scan, we got a feeling of déjà vu.

'Twins again!' Dillon said, as we stared at the sonographer's screen.

Horrible flashbacks plagued me.

I was so relieved when I hit 23 weeks.

We decided to keep the sex of the babies a surprise and wait to find out when they were born.

One day, I went to the loo and

felt something down below.

Something wasn't right.

I called Dillon and he raced home.

When paramedics arrived, they knew immediately I was in labour.

'We need to keep the babies in as long as possible,' one explained.

I was airlifted to hospital.

Please be OK, I prayed.

I was rushed in for an emergency Caesarean and put under general anaesthetic. Dillon

wasn't allowed with me and I was terrified.

When I woke up, I found out Elijah was born first, weighing 11b 7.5oz.

Then, Colton was born weighing 11b 5.5oz.

He hadn't been showing signs of life, but doctors got him breathing again.

Both babies had been whisked off to the neonatal ward.

Three days later, Colton was diagnosed with a brain haemorrhage.

Sadly, Elijah succumbed to

pneumonia at 12 days old.

Losing another child was devastating.

But we were determined to keep going for Colton.

After 132 days in intensive care, Colton was allowed home.

He needed round-the-clock care and was diagnosed with cerebral palsy just before his second birthday.

Despite his health battle, he was the happiest little boy.

Tyler loved being a big brother.

Soon, I spoke to a gynaecologist.

I wanted to find out why I kept going into premature labour.

'You have what's known as an incompetent cervix, which means it's weak,' he explained.

I had an operation to permanently stitch my cervix shut so it couldn't dilate on its own.

When Colton was four, Dillon and I wanted another baby.

I spoke to a fertility clinic about why we kept having twins.

They found out I had 10 times the number of eggs the average female had.

Soon, I found out I was pregnant again, this time with a girl.

We decided to call her Willa

Grace.

But tragedy struck again at 14 weeks.

Doctors revealed they couldn't find a heartbeat and our little girl arrived stillborn.

I didn't think my heart could take any more pain.

Even after an autopsy, it wasn't known why she had passed away.

We'd lost four babies and were emotionally drained.

A couple of years later, I felt the familiar tug of broodiness.

'Shall we try one last time?' I said to Dillon.

'Yeah, let's do it,' he replied.

I fell pregnant, but this time I was having a lot of cramping.

'It feels different to my other pregnancies,' I told Dillon.

At the six-week ultrasound, two blobs popped up on screen.

Twins again? I thought.

But as the doctor moved the Doppler across my stomach, a third baby appeared.

And then a fourth.

'You're having quadruplets,'

the doctor said in astonishment.

I felt dizzy.

Dillon froze as he went into shock.

But once it wore off, we both got excited.

My belly became so huge that I had to stop working at 14 weeks.

Mentally, it was a tough pregnancy.

I couldn't help but think back to the four babies I'd already lost.

At our gender reveal party, more than 100 people came.

As we opened the four boxes of balloons we'd ordered, I gasped.

A sea of blue balloons rose into the air.

'We're having all boys!' I exclaimed to cheers from the crowd.

Tyler came running up to us.

'Eurgh, Mama, I put my

order in for a sister!' he pouted.

It was so adorable, I couldn't

help but chuckle.

At 28 weeks, we were celebrating Tyler's seventh birthday, when I started having false labour pains.

We rushed to hospital.

I had pre-eclampsia, a condition that caused high blood pressure during pregnancy.

'We need to prepare you for labour now,' the doctor said urgently.

'We're not getting these babies out until we absolutely have to,' I said firmly.

I was kept in hospital and a week later I had my scheduled Caesarean.

As I clutched

Dillon's hand, the identical quads appeared one by one.

There was Zackariah Dever, 2lb 15oz, Lincoln Jesse, 2lb 6oz, Ian Shane, 2lb 6oz, and Daniel Robert, 2lb 15oz.

They all came out crying.

'Well done,' Dillon said, giving me a kiss.

At four weeks old, I got to hold all four of them in my arms for the first time.

It was the best feeling in the world.

The boys were in hospital for

about seven weeks and continued to get stronger each day.

In the blink of an eye, we were a family of eight and our home was full of babies!

It was absolute chaos at times.

In the first month, the quads got through almost 1000 nappies!

When they turned one, we upgraded our car to a 15-seat minivan.

As well as comfortably seating us all, it helps us ferry around Colton's medical equipment.

Now, the quads are two years old.

Every day is a challenge with six children, especially as Colton needs extra attention.

It's hard to budget, because

just our food shopping alone is £388 per week.

It feels like we are constantly busy and bedtimes are definitely a two-person job!

I get the quads in the bath together and read them all a story, while Dillon, 32, sorts out our older two.

It really is a team effort.

And as we live next door to my parents, they've been a huge support.

We've outgrown our house, so we're going to start building a new one soon that can fit us all.

Our journey to having children was a rollercoaster.

At the end of the day, grief isn't a straight line.

Even after you have your surviving children, it's OK to grieve for what you lost.

After many years of ups and downs, our family is now complete.

And I wouldn't change it for the world.

Karissa VanCamp-Smith, 34



The quads now

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