



## Emily Leathers

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On November 23, 2019, I was diagnosed with HELLP Syndrome at 34 weeks 5 days. I was being followed by a High Risk OB group about an hour and a half from my home due to a different diagnosis of psoriatic arthritis. My husband and I had gone to the High Risk doctor for the previous 2 trimesters and loved the doctor and the group and especially loved getting 4D images of our son. My original appointment had been 2 weeks earlier, but we moved it due to a friend's wedding.

When we arrived, my blood pressure was 164/98. The nurse asked if it was always that elevated, and I brushed it off due to terrible traffic on the way. She asked for me to pee in a cup and I thought that was a bit unusual, but obliged.

When we went into the exam room, the sonographer seemed flustered and we were not able to get any good images of our son. Within minutes, the doctor came rushing in and sat down and told us rather abruptly that we would be having our baby that day or the following day. I was so confused. I felt fine... I actually felt great! I had just had my baby shower and maternity photos taken the weekend before after all!

The doctor proceeded to ask us where we were planning on delivering and then recommended we deliver at a facility with a NICU. My head was swimming. This can't be right! I'm always healthy, worked out during my pregnancy, ate well, and felt good. As a nurse walked us over to the obstetric emergency department, I began to cry. I could not believe something was wrong. Lab work was collected in the emergency department and I was admitted under observation for 24 hours due to elevated liver enzymes and low platelets. I continued to think my providers were making a mountain over a mole hill and that I would be discharged the following day.

The following morning, the obstetrician came to my hospital room and told me that my



liver enzymes had doubled over night and that my platelets had dropped even more. He officially diagnosed me with HELLP syndrome. He was concerned enough that he said the only cure would be to deliver my son via C-section that day. As he left the room, the nurse gave me a steroid injection to help my tiny son's lungs produce surfactant in preparation for his entrance into the world.

I was emergently taken down to the operating room where the obstetrician unsuccessfully attempted to flip my son so he was not breech. After three attempts, I was wheeled into the operating room. With my amazing care team, and my husband by my side, our son was delivered on 11/23/2019 at 4:17PM weighing 5 pounds 7 ounces.

I was scared. I was crying. I was mad. But now, I am thankful. Since that time, I have been able to do research on HELLP syndrome and learned that it is a rare and life-threatening pregnancy complication with a mortality rate as high as 30%. I was one of only 48,000 women per year to develop this condition. Looking back at the progression, the only symptom I had the night before was nausea and indigestion after eating dinner. The rest of my symptoms were masked and only discovered by taking a blood pressure reading and doing lab work. Had I kept my original appointment, I am not sure I would be here today.

Because of the swift action and identification of my illness, I am alive today to tell our story.