

My husband and I struggled for months to get pregnant since I wasn't even really getting a period. With the help of a reproductive endocrinologist, though, our second cycle of femara, metformin, and timed intercourse was successful, and we were thrilled to be expecting a baby due January 1, 2016. What a perfect way to start the new year! Our RE monitored us closely for a while, and then released us to our obstetrician after 8 weeks.

Because of our initial struggles to get pregnant, my OB set us up with a 12-week scan, a meeting with a geneticist, and an appointment with a Maternal Fetal Medicine (MFM) doctor. The scan looked great, as did the bloodwork run by the geneticist – our baby had less than a 1% risk for any of the major trisomies, and we found out we were expecting a little girl. We were so excited. We planned a sex reveal party for a few weeks later to tell close family and friends. At 16 weeks, I had blood work done to check for neural tube defects as well. This came back normal.

Our 20-week scan was scheduled for August 20 when I was 20 weeks and 6 days. We were so excited to see our little girl. We had the scan later afternoon. As the ultrasound tech looked around, we saw our little girl moving around quite a bit, but she was being stubborn. The tech had me use the bathroom, lay on my side, etc. Then the doctor came in to take a look. I didn't think it was normal, but I wasn't sure. The doctor began looking at the heart quite a bit, as well as the brain.

As she looked, she told us that there were some severe brain and heart abnormalities, and that we may have to consider termination. She also told us the chest cavity was small, and that the lungs may not be developing properly. This was our first time meeting this particular doctor, and she presented the information to us in a harsh way, making difficult information even harder to take.

At that moment, our world came crashing down. I was hysterically crying and my husband was also visibly upset. The doctor wanted us to do an amniocentesis, and we decided to wait on those results before making any final decisions on how to proceed.

After we got home, we called my parents to give them the news, and my in-laws came over to console us. Up until this point, everything had been fine, so to find so many things wrong was unbelievable. This was our worst nightmare. We felt hopeless.

Over the weekend, I tried to be more hopeful and positive – maybe the heart issue could be fixed with surgery, maybe the doctors were wrong about everything else, she could grow out of everything. I was starting to have some hope the amnio would come back normal, and we could see how things progressed.

On Monday I went into work, and at 9:30 I got a call that the preliminary results from the amnio came back: she had triploidy, three copies of every chromosome. The geneticist explained a bit about what it is and said it's "not compatible with life." Tears began rushing down my face. I called my husband and told him the news. He was upset as well, but we both calmly made the decision to terminate.

While talking on the phone together, we both looked up more about it online and we did not want our little girl to suffer. We would much rather take on that suffering for her. We called back the geneticist at the MFM center and told them of our decision, and we said we wanted to do this as soon as possible. I was told the day of the ultrasound that I only had until 24 weeks to make a decision. They asked us to come in that afternoon to meet with a doctor and to set everything up.

We went to a hospital about 2 hours away from us for the procedure, not the hospital we planned to deliver at (they didn't perform terminations this late in a pregnancy). I was upset over this, but I think it was probably a blessing in disguise this hospital would only be associated with the memory of our termination. We went to the MFM that afternoon and met with another doctor. He was a lot kinder and more compassionate. He did another ultrasound where he confirmed what the other doctor saw. We saw her moving and kicking one last time. It was so sad. I wanted pictures, but the way she was facing made it difficult to get a good look. The doctor said he made a call to the hospital. We would go in the following day, but I would get a call in the morning with an exact time.

From the moment termination was mentioned, they said I would be doing a full labor and delivery, and I would be induced. At the doctor's office, I asked if there were other options. They said with labor and delivery, I would get to see her, hold her, and spend time with her, but with a D&C, I would not. I was grateful that their first line of thinking was to let us see her and hold her.

That night, we decide we needed to give her a name, even though we hadn't really begun the name debate yet. I mentioned to my husband the name I wanted to use and he agreed it was a perfect name. We named her Anneliese Marie, the full name of Anne Frank. And like Anne Frank, I wanted to make it my mission in life for her to go on living even after her death. Trying to sleep that night was awful; I didn't want to sleep and wanted to savor every minute I was pregnant and every minute I had with her feeling her move and kick.

We had to be at the hospital at 2 the next day. I had a nice last big meal at home, and had a nice big piece of cake, too. On our way to the hospital, we stopped at Target to pick out a blanket for her to be wrapped in when we met her. We got to the hospital, registered, and got all set up at the maternity ward. The nurses throughout my stay were so incredibly nice, as were the doctors. The head doctor there from my MFM came to greet me, and to give me an idea of what would happen and what to expect. They fed me, and then around 7, I got my first dose of cytotec. This would happen every 3 hours. I also received a visit from the doctor I had met with the day before to see how I was doing.

At around 8, my husband's parents came by, and my parents arrived a bit later. We actually wound up watching TV and playing card games. It is very strange looking back how calm I was and unemotional over the whole thing. I think I wanted to meet her and see her, even though I knew she'd be sleeping when she arrived. A priest also came by at our request say a prayer, give us a blessing. We also requested a priest to baptize or bless her once she arrived. I slept for a little while not needing any pain medication at all. I woke up for a dose of cytotec around 9am and I noticed I started feeling a lot more cramping and pain, and I also had some bleeding. I was given some pain medications but nothing seemed to work.

The pain was really intense. I had no idea what to do, and I felt a gush, so I guess my water had broken. I was in the worst pain ever, and they sent me up to labor and delivery. They finally gave me some good pain medication to ease the pain. I was relaxed and sleepy. At one point, I turned over and I noticed I felt something between my legs – she was coming. The doctors and nurses rushed in. After a few pushes, she was out. I was so glad it was over. My husband was able to see, and he told me he knew she was already born sleeping. At 3:16pm August 26, 2015 Anneliese Marie was born.

After what felt like forever, they brought her to me. She was so tiny – only 7 ounces. I knew that was less than what she should have weighed at 21 weeks. She was wearing a little pink knitted hat and was

wrapped in a blanket from the hospital and the one we brought for her. I immediately cried. She was so tiny but beautiful. She looked just like my husband. She had his chin, my nose, and these long fingers. She would have been such a good piano player.

Our parents came in to see her and us. They had waited in the waiting room overnight just so they could see her and hold her. My dad was in tears, and everyone else seemed to be doing ok. We had my mother and my husband's father be the godparents. The priest came in shortly thereafter to bless Anneliese. Later, we were taken down to a room in the maternity ward, so I could recover. We brought Anneliese with us, and she was able to spend the night with us in our room.

My recovery was fine, other than bleeding. The nurse was a bit shocked my stomach had shrunk back down to normal so quickly. I kept staring at Anneliese, touching her, admiring her the whole time. I didn't want it to end. I wished she was ok and that we could take her home. I took a shower and when I came out I saw my husband hold her showing her the city and the lights. It broke my heart. We all stayed in the room overnight. It was the only time we would ever be a family of 3.

The next morning, the doctor who helped deliver Anneliese came by to see how I was doing. He assured us next pregnancy they would do everything possible to make me worry less and hopefully prevent something like this from ever happening again. The nurses were so wonderful. Shortly before we left, the priest came by again to see how we were doing. He said it was his day off but he wanted to come by because he was so moved by us. He thought Anneliese was such a beautiful name, and he had Googled it the night before, but all that came up was Anne Frank. He asked if we knew that was her full name, if we had intentionally named Anneliese that or if it was coincidence. When we told him it was intentional, his eyes welled up with tears.

We were given a memory box with her hospital bracelet, the tape measure she was measured with, her baptism certificate, and a certificate with her hand prints and footprints. As we left, our nurse removed the hat she was wearing and the blanket we bought and wrapped her up in and added them to her memory box. I said goodbye to her right before we left. I kissed her, held her little hand, and told her how much we loved her and would always love her. I was wheeled out of the hospital to our car, sans pregnancy and sans any baby. I was an entirely different person in just 7 days.