

# The agony of MY IVE ADDICTION

Jessica Hepburn, 43, has the strangest obsession – and it's driven by the most desperate pain

**L**ying in bed, propped up on pillows, I took a deep breath and pushed the needle deep into my stomach. I winced as I watched the drugs empty into me. My skin was puckered and purple with unsightly bruises from the last four years of these daily jabs. Yet however much it hurt me, whatever harm I was doing to my body, I couldn't stop. It was January 2010 and I was suffering from the most terrible addiction – one that only a woman like me would ever understand.

Looking back, it seems hard to fathom how I could have ended up like this. Things had started so very differently...

By the age of 34, I'd become an executive director of a London theatre. I'd been brought up believing you succeeded in work before you thought about children. So it wasn't until then, when I was settled with Peter, a marketing executive, that we started trying for a baby – on Christmas Day 2004. It seemed a

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magical date and of course we weren't worried when it didn't work, we simply spent the next weeks having fun together, hoping it would.

Only, after six months, I began to worry. Why wasn't I conceiving? I bought an ovulation kit and worked out my most fertile time. 'We've got to try for a baby now,' I told Peter whenever the 'right' moment struck. He took it with good humour at first but I grew more demanding, once phoning him on a business trip and saying he had to come home – now!

Finally, we went for tests. The depressing conclusion was that I had 'unexplained infertility'. In other words, there was no medical reason I wasn't conceiving. Yet it gave me hope it could happen. But it also meant there were no instant cures or quick fixes.

In July 2006, Peter and I paid £1,000 to try IUI, a procedure whereby my womb would be artificially inseminated with his sperm. But at the last moment, I panicked. 'This isn't how making a baby should be,' I sobbed. Peter took me home, and for the next year, we tried to make a baby naturally. Finally, in 2007, aged 37, I realised I didn't care how I got pregnant as long as it worked! I desperately wanted to be part of the elite motherhood club.

## Whatever it takes

So we went to a fertility clinic, paying £6,000 for our first IVF cycle. The process was physically punishing – an injection to shut down my normal menstrual cycle, two weeks of daily hormone jabs to stimulate egg production, then invasive egg collection under general anaesthetic.

My body ached from the poking, prodding and drugs, my moods swang from happiness

to tears in an instant, but I told myself it would all be worth it. 'Science is going to give me a baby,' I thought. And two weeks after the health embryos were implanted in my womb, a pregnancy test showed positive. I was ecstatic but the nurse warned me not to be too hopeful. The pregnancy hormone was low. All we could do was wait and see. And after another two

At 34, the age she started trying for a baby



