



GV Health staff in the Special Care Nursery celebrating World Prematurity Day

World Prematurity Day is November 17

WORLD PREMATURETY DAY SEEKS TO RAISE AWARENESS FOR PREMATURE BIRTHS, CELEBRATING BABIES WHO HAVE GRADUATED FROM NEONATAL UNITS TO EVENTUALLY GO HOME WITH THEIR FAMILIES, AND HONOURING THOSE BABIES BORN TOO EARLY TO SURVIVE.

For Holly Lehman, a midwife at GV Health and a first-time mother, the premature birth of her daughter Poppy was an experience nothing, not even years of supporting new mothers through the birth process, could have prepared her for.

Holly's pregnancy was planned, but early complications quickly shifted her focus from excitement to worry.

"At around 28 weeks, a growth scan showed that Poppy was growing normally, but my placenta wasn't functioning properly," Holly shared.

"It was labelled as 'abnormal Dopplers,' and that's when I was referred to the Women's Hospital in Melbourne."

By 30 weeks, the situation had intensified. The blood flow between the placenta and Poppy was reaching dangerous levels.

Holly was admitted to the hospital for close monitoring and prepared for the possibility of an early delivery.

At exactly 32 weeks, doctors made the decision to deliver Poppy via a planned emergency C-section.

Holly's partner, James Fawkes, had been staying in nearby accommodation while waiting for Poppy to be delivered.

He described it as "about the most stressful thing I think you can go through." "You're worried about losing two people, not

just one, I think that's the hardest thing," James said.

"Having to leave Holly every night was horrible.

"Everyone was great during the birth, everyone was very calm.

"But it would've been good if there was a way to stay and not have to leave the hospital in that sort of situation."

Poppy arrived on May 23, weighing just 1.4 kilograms.

She needed a bit of help with her breathing initially, but within hours, she was breathing on her own.

While Holly's background in midwifery provided her with an understanding of the medical process, experiencing it personally was a different story.

"I was a mother first, and it was incredibly emotional," Holly reflected.

"It felt like I was going to work every day instead of just being a mum, especially when we returned to GV Health after the birth."

The pressure of Holly's experience took a toll on her mental health and she was diagnosed with postnatal depression.

"Trusting others to care for Poppy was hard, but GV Health provided exceptional mental health support," she said.

"I had counselling and was connected with the Wren team (Women's Recovery Network),

which made a huge difference." Six months on, and Poppy is thriving.

Holly said returning to work as a midwife after her birthing experience will come with its challenges, but that it would also help her care for her patients in a way she wasn't able to before.

"I've had friends tell me that midwives who are also mothers understand in a different way," Holly said.

"I want to use my experience to provide even better support to women facing similar challenges."

Holly encourages new mothers, especially those dealing with premature births, to seek support and lean on those around them.

"It's essential to take the support offered, whether it's from mental health teams, family, or friends, anything you can get" she said. "It allows you to focus on yourself and your baby."

To find out about GV Health's maternity services, please visit www.gvhealth.org.au/our-services/maternity-services/



Holly Lehman with her daughter Poppy