

Sandhurst mum campaigns over infection risks

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A Sandhurst mum is calling for more to be done to warn parents about a dangerous infection after her newborn daughter came close to death earlier this year.



Kim Tomlinson with husband Paul and daughter Molly (seven months). Kim is campaigning for more awareness of Group B Streptococcus after Molly contracted it when she was born.

Kim Tomlinson, 33, gave birth to her first child, Molly, now seven months old, at Frimley Park Hospital.

Kim said: "The midwives told us that it was normal for babies to be sleepy during the first 24 hours so, being new parents, we didn't think there was anything wrong." Kim and her husband Paul took their daughter back to their home in Owlsmoor, Sandhurst.

However, Molly continued to be very lethargic during the next day and her mum had to set an alarm and wake her up every three hours to feed her.

Kim became so concerned that she decided to phone the hospital. She was told to bring Molly in straight away where they were met by doctors who gave the two-day-old antibiotics. They took a blood test which showed that Molly had an infection but couldn't tell what it was. "If we hadn't got her to hospital in 48 hours she probably wouldn't be alive today," said Kim.

The drugs brought the infection under control, but then Kim fell ill and her temperature spiked to over 39 degrees. A blood test found that she had Group B Streptococcus.

Doctors then realised that Molly probably had the same infection. They had dismissed the idea that Molly had caught anything from her mother because Kim wasn't ill.

Kim said: "It took three days for the infection to come out in me, but for a little baby only 48 hours old, who has no immune system, it was much quicker."

After six days, mother and daughter were both discharged from hospital with a clean bill of health. Now Kim is helping Group B Strep Support to raise awareness about the condition and to campaign for better testing of expectant mothers.

Kim said that all though her pregnancy she was never warned about the dangers of the bacteria.

In the UK, one in 10 babies with Group B Strep dies and one in 20 survivors suffer long-term health problems, including possible limb loss and meningitis.

Kim said: "We could have prevented this, it would have been so easy." She said that even if the NHS cannot afford to screen all women then they should let people pay for it if they want. The test costs around £12. In many countries, including Canada, France, Germany, Lithuania and Slovenia, the condition is treated with routine screening and antibiotics during labour.

Kim knows that she would have to take these drugs if she were to have another baby, but for half of the babies infected, their mothers show no sign of having the infection.