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Photos by Serena S.



Serena's son on an Ontario Beach.

After I had my first child, it took a longer time for me to recover from the delivery than I had anticipated. I didn't have a cesarean delivery, but even still, I had back pain, incontinence and fatigue for weeks. I got into a pattern where I ignored how I was feeling so I could make it through another night with a newborn. I wanted to focus my full attention on my child and my family.

But even 6 months out from my delivery date, I felt off. I couldn't put into words what I was feeling. I had anxiety for the first time. I had a short temper. I couldn't sleep at night. I had a voracious appetite, frequently eating double portions. My husband went so far as to say that my personality had changed. To say it put a strain on our relationship would be an understatement.

I think I was avoiding seeing my doctor about this. I knew there was something wrong with me, but I didn't want to find out what it was. When I finally saw him, he ordered some basic blood tests and did a physical exam. He thought what I was experiencing could be a form of postpartum depression or physical deconditioning. He suggested I get back into exercising and spend some time focusing on me.

I took his advice to heart, joined a gym and bought a wearable fitness monitor. I noticed pretty quickly that I had an unusually high resting heart rate. It was over 100 bpm,

even when I was sleeping. Week after week, it never went down. I printed out the results and brought them back to the doctor, who ordered more blood tests and cardiac investigations. It turns out I have Graves disease. My thyroid hormone levels were 10 times higher than normal.

I saw a specialist and started treatment right away with 2 medications, propranolol and methimazole. If I'm being honest, I hated being on the medication. As my hormone levels came down to normal, I started gaining weight and feeling sluggish, with a drop in my stamina and energy. I jokingly told my doctor that every new mom could use a touch of hyperthyroidism to make it through the first few months of motherhood. I'm fully in remission and off all medications now.

I love being a mom. But I think I used the excuse to ignore my own health issues and avoid seeking medical attention.

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