

...w-dropping real life

# It took 69 PINTS OF BLOOD TO SAVE MY LIFE!

When Emma Norfolk, 29, had her baby, she ended up fighting for her life. But help was at hand

Staring at the hospital ceiling, Emma felt nervous but happy as the surgeon performing her Caesarean worked away behind a screen placed over her tummy.

Soon she'd have her second child in her arms – and she couldn't wait. Emma felt no pain, just the odd tug as the surgeon worked. She glanced at her husband John, who smiled encouragingly.

Suddenly, a piercing cry filled the room. 'It's a girl!' the midwife said, handing a tiny bundle to John.

'Isn't she gorgeous?' he said, crouching down by Emma's side. He held the baby close so that their faces were touching.

'Hello Ava,' Emma said gently. John beamed, delighted. He now had two little princesses to spoil. Their two-year-old daughter Ruby, who was waiting at home with his parents, would love her new sister.

But, feeling sick, Emma was fighting to keep her eyes open. 'Perhaps you should wait

outside,' she heard one of the medical team telling John.

Confused, Emma wondered what was going on. Why had John gone? Where was Ava?

Emma was moved to her own room and as she drifted in and out of consciousness, she heard snatches of conversation. Drips

## 'She had no idea of the trauma she'd been through'

were attached to her arms and a drain was placed in her neck.

John paced around Emma's room, cuddling his new daughter.

As the afternoon drew into evening, he fed Ava with a bottle as he waited to hear news about his wife. It was obvious something was very wrong.

Then his ears pricked up as he overheard a nurse on the phone to another department. 'Do you

have any spare blood we can have?' she asked quietly.

John froze with horror.

'What's going on?' he asked.

'Emma's haemorrhaging and we can't stop the bleeding,' a doctor explained. 'I'm going to have to perform an emergency hysterectomy and we usually

only hold a few pints of blood.'

John turned to Emma. Her face was pale and she seemed to have difficulty focusing. But she was awake. His face creased with concern as he gently brushed the hair away from her eyes.

'Do whatever you have to,' she mumbled sleepily.

As the surgeons wheeled Emma into theatre for her second operation, she touched John's

hand. 'Give Ruby and Ava a kiss for me,' she whispered.

For the next two hours, John waited anxiously. Seeing a surgeon emerge, he sprang to his feet.

'She's still losing a lot of blood, but she's holding on,' he told John. Soon Emma had stabilised and she was moved to intensive care.

'You should go home and get some sleep,' a nurse told John. Kissing his wife's sleeping face, John reluctantly left.

But when he called early the next day, he was in for a shock.

'You need to come now,' the nurse told him. 'Emma's haemorrhaging again.' She was already back in surgery.

Shaking, John hurried to the hospital. It hit him for the first time that Emma might not survive.

By the time he arrived, she was out of surgery. 'Come on Emma, please don't leave us,' John begged.

But suddenly Emma's blood pressure monitor started to beep. 'Nurse, come quickly!' John

# OD FE!



Emma is so happy to be here for



Exhausted: Emma with Ava in hospital



shouted. The nurse ran to get help and John stood by helplessly as the doctors whisked Emma away.

Once more, the surgeon battled to stop her bleeding to death. But as fast as they gave her blood transfusions, she started bleeding again.

Finally, two and a half hours later, it stopped.

Emma was wheeled back to the ward. She was safe for now – but she would need more surgery.

'We're going to tie some feeder arteries off to stop the bleeding for good,' the surgeon explained.

For the next two days, Emma lay unconscious, her battered body slowly regaining strength. John divided his time between her bedside and the baby unit where nurses were looking after Ava.

At last, Emma was taken for her final operation. After two and a

half hours, a surgeon appeared.

'It was a complete success,' she told John, with a huge smile.

John had tried so hard to keep it together. But now he broke down, the relief washing over him. Emma was going to be okay.

The next morning Emma finally woke up. She'd been unconscious for five days.

Sleepily she smiled at John – she had no idea of the trauma she'd been through.

John brought their new daughter to see her mum. Lying Ava on Emma's chest, he had to fight back the tears as she slowly lifted her hand to touch her baby's

face. It was a moment he'd feared he would never see.

Over the next few days, Emma quickly recovered.

The surgeons explained what had happened. Emma's placenta had overgrown during pregnancy and become attached to her internal organs. It had to be cut away, causing the bleeding that had been so difficult to stop.

But most amazingly of all, Emma had received 69 pints of blood, bussed in from several hospitals – enough to fill eight people!

That meant 69 individuals had given up their time to donate blood. Had they ever wondered

whose life they would be saving?

As she heard how the medical staff had refused to give up on her, the tears came. 'I can't thank you enough,' she told them.

Emma knew she wouldn't be able to have any more children. But she was alive and would be there for the two she had – and that was what counted.

It's now four months since Emma nearly died, and she's still overwhelmed when she thinks of all the people who helped save her life.

'It's amazing that there are so many kind-hearted people out there,' Emma says. 'I just feel humbled when I think of all the who donated blood.'

'Without them, my little girls wouldn't have a mummy. I'm grateful to every one of them.'

● To become a blood donor, call National Blood Service on 0845 771 1711 or visit [www.blood.co.uk](http://www.blood.co.uk)