

# HOW MANY EGGS?

TRUE LIFE STORY

Amanda waits to hear important news...

## The story so far

Unable to conceive naturally, Amanda and her hubby Paul decide on IVF. But then Paul is diagnosed with cancer. Suddenly the couple are fighting a far bigger battle — just to keep him alive. Now, with Paul having been given the all-clear, the couple restart the IVF process. But that's just about to get very painful... (To read last week's story in full, go to [www.thatslife.co.uk](http://www.thatslife.co.uk).)

**F**ried... Scrambled... Poached. ... I've become obsessed by eggs, even having them for breakfast every morning. Yesterday, one had twin yolks.

'It's a sign!' I shrieked in mock horror. 'We're going to have twins!' Paul and I laughed.

Then, for the first time in quite a long time, we allowed ourselves a little fantasy, imagining our own child — or children.

But today we're not laughing as we sit holding hands in the fertility clinic's reception.

After a week's injections to make my ovaries produce more eggs, I injected a new drug exactly 35 hours ago, to ripen the eggs for collection.

Now my eggs have to be retrieved. A doctor will use a needle to suck fluid from my

follicles — the sacs in the ovary where the eggs grow — then an embryologist will search the fluid for eggs.

At last, we'll discover if I've produced any, and if they're good enough to be fertilised.

But I've only got four follicles — normally women would have 11 to 30 — so we already know it's going to be slim pickings.

When the doctor calls my name, I quickly give Paul a goodbye kiss.

He has to do his own 'sperm retrieval' today, but it's a lot less technical than my procedure — involving Paul, a plastic tumbler and a selection of rather saucy magazines!

As the doctor takes me into a room with a stretcher with the dreaded 'stirrups', I start rambling about all the IVF blunders in the news recently.

One article, with the headline *Over 200 IVF blunders*, described how sperms and eggs had been mixed up, and embryos implanted into the wrong women. But thank God, not at our clinic.

Nevertheless, I'm relieved to see my name written on a board — no mix-up here. I just wish I'd told Paul to write his name on the pot for his sperm sample.

With all the scary-looking machinery, there's barely enough space to swing a cat, but the doctor, nurse and anaesthetist all cram in as I climb onto the stretcher. Then what appears to

be a dinner hatch in the wall opens up, and a chirpy face pops out! 'Hello!' she says, 'Name and date of birth, please?'

This is surreal. Part of me feels like saying: 'A portion of spam, egg and chips, please!'

I'm starving, after all — I haven't been allowed to eat or drink since midnight. But she's not the dinner lady. She's my embryologist, waiting for the eggs.

After the anaesthetist puts a needle into my hand, I go woozy... then everything turns black.

I don't know how much time passes before I'm vaguely aware of being put on a bed with a curtain around it.

I try to lift my head, but it's as heavy as a cannonball.

But through a mental fog, I hear a nurse say 'three eggs' and I feel like leaping off the bed, jumping up and down in jubilation.

Then the curtain's pulled back and Paul appears, smiling.

'Three... They got *three* eggs,' I manage to slur.

But seconds later I feel stabbing pains down below.

'The doctor said he had to prod around quite a lot to get to your follicles,' the nurse says, giving me some painkillers. The curse of the four follicles!

I feel very zombie-like as I ask Paul how *he* got on.

'I got there in the end,' he tells me simply.

Then I hear the woman in the next bed announcing that she produced *seven* eggs.

I listen with a darkening mood

as the nurse says that's normal — most women produce six to eight. And suddenly I feel like the IVF dunce. But instead of a dunce's cap, there's a black cloud over my head.

Then Miss Seven Eggs starts demanding decaf coffee, despite the nurse reassuring her the normal coffee on offer won't do her any harm.

Smug Seven Eggs is so insistent, I feel like ripping the curtain aside and force-feeding her a double espresso. Does she think we're in Starbucks?!

Then the nurse helps me to the loo. Walking like a cowboy, I realise my gown is flapping open, revealing the bruises where I've been injecting myself. 'Ooh!' the nurse says. 'They're nasty.'

Paul winces. 'It's mad that you have to do this to yourself,' he says sadly.

I agree. Finally, after two hours in recovery, I'm allowed to leave and see the embryologist.

'Three eggs is great!' she says cheerfully, and my mood lifts instantly. The clinic will now put my eggs and Paul's sperm into a Petri dish to see if they 'make friends'. They'll ring us tomorrow to tell us if the eggs have fertilised.

If so, in two days' time, I could be having at least one embryo implanted in my womb.

But I stop that thought in its tracks. I daren't even think that far ahead. It's going to be a nail-biting wait.

**AMANDA REVELL WALTON, 40, HIGHWORTH, WILTSHIRE**

**NEXT WEEK...** Amanda and Paul discover whether the fertilisation has worked or not.

Me just after the egg retrieval



I keep reading stories about IVF blunders

Photos: Tracey Griffin