

I'm feeling like Jekyll and Hyde

I think I'm going mad

Amanda's IVF drugs are doing the strangest things

The story so far

Unable to have a baby 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 will they even get past the 'sniffing' stage? (To read the previous part of the story, go to www.thatslife.co.uk.)



Paul needs another scan

All I want to do is get my IVF started, but my body isn't doing what it's supposed to.

The drug I've been sniffing should have already triggered an early temporary menopause — or, in IVF speak, made me 'down-regulate'.

But yesterday a scan showed my womb lining had thickened instead of shed, and I'd developed cysts. Not good signs at all.

Yet now, when I phone the clinic, I'm told my last blood tests showed I have down-regulated and can finally start injecting my next round of fertility drugs to initiate ovulation.

'Really?!' I say, over the moon. I hang up, ecstatic, and run downstairs to tell Paul. Then I ring Mum. Then my sister. 'I've down-regulated!' I keep announcing.

But my euphoria fades. Is this really possible? Or has there been a mistake?

I ring the clinic again and speak to Bridget, my fairy-godmother-like nurse. 'I'm afraid you've still not down-regulated, Amanda.'

she says gently.

'I'm now totally confused,' I reply.

'I've just been told the opposite!' She goes to check.

'I'm so sorry, there's been a mistake,' Bridget says finally. 'You must keep sniffing — not injecting.'

I can't quite believe the incompetence. What would have happened if I'd started injecting?

But there seems no point in getting hysterical. I take a deep breath and listen as Bridget says I should 'hope and pray' that I bleed over the following days, shedding my womb lining.

The irony hits me like a slap in the face. For the first time in four years, I actually want to have a period!

'Hang in there,' she urges.

But when I put the phone down, I feel exhausted.

When I still haven't bled after four days, it's back to hospital — for a double whammy of appointments.

First, Paul and I go to the fertility unit, where the nurse tells me the cysts aren't a worry — it's my wretched womb lining causing the delay.

Ten minutes later, we go for Paul's regular cancer check-up. We're hoping to be in and out, but nothing's going as expected at the moment.

The doctor says they want to

book Paul in for another scan. I feel sick with dread. It doesn't matter how many times this happens, it doesn't make it any easier.

We drive home with heavy hearts.

Phoning the fertility unit the next day, I tell a lovely, down-to-earth nurse that I still haven't bled.

'Why isn't my body doing what it's supposed to?' I ask her.

'Try not to worry,' she replies.

'But what if I don't bleed?' I say.

'Then we'll chop your head off!' she jokes. 'Then we'll cart you off to the nutty home!'

'I'm not far off there as it is!' I chuckle, glad of her humour in these dark times.

'It's only a glitch and it will be ironed out,' she says, then tells me to use special pessaries to speed up the shedding process.

Over the next week, I keep sniffing the Synarel — the menopause-inducing nasal spray. I've been on it for almost double the expected time, five weeks in total. My eyes always feel puffed up. I'm exhausted, as the night sweats stop me sleeping. And I have a constant headache.

I'm spiralling into a worn-out depression, and feel like Jekyll and Hyde! One minute, I want to rip someone's head off. Moments later, I'm as serene as a monk.

Finally, on Day 57, the pessaries actually work. Hurrah!

To get confirmation, I have to return to the clinic yet again. I

feel like I'm in *Groundhog Day*.

I'm now so mentally low that when I see a couple emerge giggling from a consultation room — they've obviously not started their treatment yet — I want to hiss at them: 'Stop it!'

When I go in for my blood tests, I ask the nurse if this is how the menopause feels. She nods vigorously. 'Well, I'll definitely be taking bucket loads of HRT, then!' I reply. And I'm not joking.

Thankfully, the results are ready in a day. Then I'm told: 'You can now start injecting — tonight!'

Part of me feels like there should be a fanfare of jubilant trumpet-blowing. Hallelujah!

But then I hit the ground with a terrifying thud, and fear courses through my body. Tonight, I have to inject myself for the first time ever. And it terrifies me!

AMANDA REVELL WALTON, 40, HIGHWORTH, WILTSHIRE

'I'm spiralling into a worn-out depression'



Mum's very supportive



With my sister Jane and her baby Ivor



We've finally reached the next step

Next week...

Amanda enters a new world of needles, different drugs and difficult challenges...