



# Baby bulge

Michelle's new diet solved more than just her weight problems

**D**oubled over in agony, I clutched my belly. "This period pain is awful," I complained to my mum, Rose, 53.

"All teenagers go through it, honey," she replied.

Some of my friends had period pain, but none of them suffered like I did. My younger sister, Tracey, never had problems either.

My mum took me to my GP, but he said the same thing: "You'll grow out of it."

From a young age, I was put on the contraceptive pill to try to control the pain, but it hardly helped at all.

When I turned 18, I met Brian\*. We married young,

but decided to wait to start a family.

When I was told I had endometriosis and polycystic ovaries aged 19, I was devastated.

"You're clinically infertile," the doctor told me gravely.

"If you want kids, you'd better start trying now. Your chances will lessen as you get older." Devastated, I broke the news to Brian. "I wanted us to have kids at some stage anyway," he smiled.

After a few years of trying naturally with no success, I underwent several rounds of fertility treatment.

"It's not happening," I wept miserably night after night.

By the time I was 28, I was emotionally exhausted.

"I can't keep doing this," I told Brian. "It's wearing me down." We discussed adoption, but then realised it wasn't for us.

Brian and I eventually parted. The stress of what we'd been through was too much for our marriage.

Or perhaps, the quest for a baby had been keeping us together all those years.

Either way, suddenly single, I realised how unhappy I'd been.

I also noticed I'd put on weight. At 162cm tall, weighing 71kg meant I wasn't enormous, but the extra weight was making me uncomfortable.

I tried all sorts of diets, but nothing worked.

"I'm fat," I said to Mum.

"You're not, darling," she said. "All you need is a change of focus."

Up until then, I'd worked

in office jobs, but I'd always dreamed of being a psychologist.

So I enrolled in a part-time psychology course, continuing with my office work to fund it.

Straightaway, I started feeling better about myself.

I had mourned and decided to move on from the possibility of being a mum.

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It was time for me now.

The only ongoing thorn in my side was my health.

Well into my 20s, my periods remained erratic and painful but for the last year they'd stopped completely. Then one day, in early 2006, Mum called me up excitedly.

"I've just read about a company called MassAttack in a magazine at the doctor's surgery," she said.

She read out the ad to me and I nearly dropped the phone in shock.

"Are you bloated and overweight?" she read. "Suffering from period pains or abnormalities? Contact us. We can help."

I looked up the company online. As I scrolled through the pages, it was as if they were talking to me directly.

After signing up online, the company's founder, Narelle Stegehuis, called me.

"I'm a naturopath," she explained, before asking me about my medical and weight history.

"Your hormones are out of kilter," she said.

"Hormones cause weight gain in 74 per cent of women. What we need to do is rebalance them, and give your metabolism a kick-start."

MassAttack works on an individualised approach, and together we worked out that my oestrogen levels were too high.

Narelle advised me to buy some herbal remedies, and outlined a special, personalised diet for me.

**T**he diet runs on a traffic-light system, and I found out I was eating all the wrong foods for my body.

Broccoli and cauliflower are both on my red light list, while foods like apples and nuts get the green light.

My yellow list consists of foods that I'm allowed in moderation, like lentils and legumes. These foods work to clear oestrogen and help balance my hormones.

In the past, I'd have two slices of white toast for breakfast, followed by a sandwich for lunch and pasta for dinner.

I was eating too many refined carbohydrates and not enough good fats and proteins. On my traffic-light diet, I'd have an omelette for breakfast, a salad wrap for lunch and fish or lentil stew for dinner.

I started snacking on fruits and nuts throughout the day and stopped eating carbohydrates after lunch.

At first, my green list seemed small compared to what I wasn't allowed on my red list, and I worried it would be restrictive.



Being overweight made me feel uncomfortable



With my miracle baby Tane

But, before long, I was munching away on my "green" foods quite happily.

"I don't even miss pasta," I told my mum. "And I'm allowed wheat-free bread which tastes the same."

I started to feel energised and far less stressed right away. Within the first month, I got my period back.

"Mum, it's working,"

I cried. The weight slowly started melting off, my period pains improved and I felt better than ever before.

Around this time, I met Mike, 35, at work.

He must've noticed my new-found confidence because we started flirting and soon became an item.

When we'd been dating for a few months I told him I couldn't have kids.

"That's okay," he said.

"We have each other and that's what is important."

Mike was a keen rugby player, forever encouraging me to go to the gym.

Six months into our relationship, while out on a run together, I started to feel sick. "Keep up," he goaded, as I trailed behind.

"I feel sick," I moaned. The feeling passed, but the next morning it was back.

Oh my God, I thought, the hair on the back of my neck rising. I can't be ...

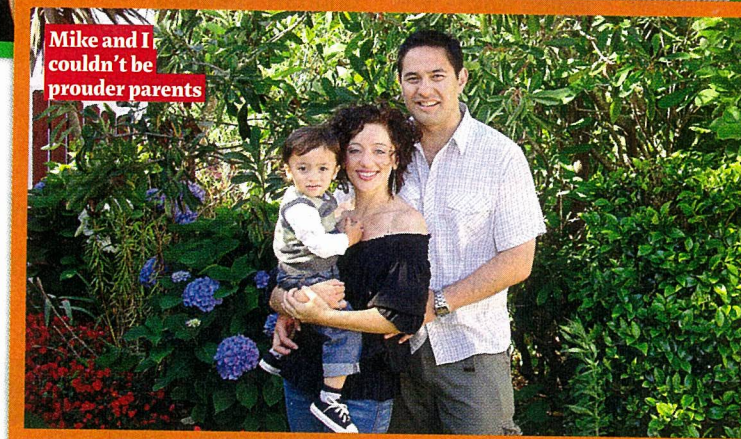
Rushing to the pharmacy, I bought six pregnancy tests. Back home, I started screaming when the blue line appeared. Every test was positive.

I was pregnant.

Calling Mike, he could barely understand me, I was so excited.

"You tricked me!" he teased, but he was just as thrilled as I was.

When I told Narelle, she



Mike and I couldn't be prouder parents

wasn't surprised. "Feeding your body the right foods can have unbelievable results," she said.

On May 28, 2007, I gave birth to my beautiful baby boy, Tane.

Afterwards, I stuck to my MassAttack diet, and within a year was back down to my goal weight of 55kg.

Mike and I recently got engaged and I can't wait for us to start our lives together.

Ever since I was a teenager, my life had been

ruled by my hormones.

Now, I'm healthy and engaged, with a beautiful son. Who could ask for anything more?

**Michelle Curmi, 33, Deer Park, Vic.**

\*Name has been changed.

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