

Surrogate mom of twins unfazed after baby deal falls apart

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A Bathurst, N.B., woman is planning to be a surrogate mother again, even though her private arrangement with another couple fell apart only weeks before she delivered twins.

The twins born to Cathleen Hachey, 20, in June are now in Nova Scotia with an adopted family.

The current living arrangement for the children came about following a “frantic” period after a British couple backed out on a surrogacy arrangement with Hachey.

The mother said she was interested in becoming a surrogate parent and began investigating the process online.

She said she met a British couple online and became friends with them, keeping in touch with them daily for three or four months.

When a surrogate parent backed out on them, the British couple came to Canada for a vacation and visited Hachey in the northern New Brunswick city of Bathurst.

While in New Brunswick, the couple and Hachey decided to try and get pregnant.

“We decided we’d give it one shot, if it works it works and if it doesn’t, it doesn’t. We signed contracts and then we started the inseminations,” Hachey said.

The conception was not done in a clinic, but at home with a syringe and semen from a cup.

Hachey said the surrogacy deal was not done for money, and she received only a \$200 stipend for food.

'I said, absolutely not, these are your children your responsibility, I didn't sign up for parenthood.'

— Cathleen Hachey, surrogate mother

The beginning of the pregnancy went well, but Hachey said signs that the arrangement were beginning to fray first started to show when she was in the hospital.

About 27 weeks into the pregnancy, she was hospitalized and shocked to find out the couple were backing out of the deal.

“I called them and I said, ‘You have to come now, the babies could be here any day.’”

“They decided then to let me know that they were living apart, they were separated for the time being and they didn't know if they were going to have a divorce. This is all through text message [and] I was in a hospital bed.”

She then sent a text message to the babies' father, who told her she would need to take care of the children for six to eight weeks so some paperwork could be filled out.

"I said, absolutely not, these are your children your responsibility, I didn't sign up for parenthood," she said.

Hachey said she told the father that she wasn't prepared to look after the children.

As the arrangement with the British couple fell apart, Hachey began to look for other options for the twins.

A few weeks before the babies were born, she found a family in Nova Scotia who agreed to adopt the babies.

The infants are now in Nova Scotia and the adoption is almost complete.

Despite the ordeal, Hachey said she expects to be a surrogate again, although next time she said she'll go through an agency and use a lawyer.

"I love pregnancy, I loved birthing. I loved everything about it," she said.

"Unfortunately with this economy, I can't have 50 kids, so why not help people who can't."

Other complications

There were other complications between Hachey and the couple during the pregnancy.

Hachey was ordered to bed rest but the couple refused to pay any added costs for her to stay home.

The emotional toll the pregnancy was having on Hachey led to the breakup of her own relationship.

And as a single parent, she had to ignore the doctor's orders for bed rest.

The Assisted Human Reproduction Technology Act, which was passed in 2004, states a surrogate who carries a fetus for others may be reimbursed for expenses such as prenatal vitamins and costs of travelling to the doctor. But she cannot receive any payment for carrying the child.

Lawyer warns against independent route

Sherry Levitan, a fertility lawyer based in Toronto, said it is a troubling story. She said especially worrying was the independent route Hachey took without a lawyer.

"There are almost always problems when people go independently because they're not sure what questions they should be asking and what protections they should put in place," she said.

Canadian law requires a woman be 21 before she can enter into a surrogacy agreement. Hachey was 19. Levitan also said the home insemination posed health risks.

"At least the agency will make sure she is with a couple that is doing this for the right reasons, are not going to ask too much of her, and will be there to support her," Levitan said.