Pregnancy Over 40 with Michelle Johnson

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IN THIS EPISODE

Michelle Johnson had her first baby at 25 — a smooth pregnancy and an unmedicated birth she swore she would never repeat without pain relief — and then, after law school, single motherhood, and a second marriage at 41, she did it all again. Twice. With Dr. Elliot Berlin, DC, the lawyer, mother of three, and founder and host of the Pregnancy After 40 podcast and community compares pregnancy in her 20s and her 40s: Googling herself into a depression over "geriatric" statistics, the IUGR and extreme swelling of her first pregnancy after 40, the fatigue that made naps non-negotiable, the comfort of a maternal-fetal specialist watching every month — and, in her third pregnancy, the bite-size Snickers that did what cheese, yogurt, and popcorn could not for her fasting numbers. Along the way she shares why she started her Facebook group from her nursing chair, one week after her son was born, and how some 5,000 women now trade the personal experiences the statistics leave out.

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DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Welcome to the informed pregnancy and parenting podcast. I'm your host dr Elliott Berlin my guest today has created a special online space for women who are pregnant We're trying to become pregnant over the age of 40 She's been a mom for 18 years and her youngest is now approaching one year old She's the host of the podcast pregnancy after 40 and she's here to share her own story and more about her platform Michelle Johnson, welcome to the podcast. Thank you so much for having me. So glad to be here today I will say that a very significant portion of my clientele fit your genre pregnancy over 40 a Lot of them having babies for the first time at or after 40 and certainly a second third babies

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: In fact, we could outdo you and we've had several pregnancy after 50 I think it'll be a small listenership, but and maybe not worth its own podcast But I suppose over 50 is over 40 so they could just join your platform

MICHELLE JOHNSON: They absolutely can our youngest is 39, but it's 39 and up We've had women in there up to the age of having babies at least at 48 a couple that I've heard at 49 So yeah

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Let's send you our 50 moms. And by the way, some of them are so fit and healthy You'd have no idea that they were over 50 and oftentimes they have amazing pregnancies, too So I would love to jump right in and get a little bit more about your background and how you came to be the queen in this space I

MICHELLE JOHNSON: Like to think of myself as a queen in my home, but everyone doesn't think that but So, yeah, so I have three children I had my first at 25 and she is now 18 and I was actually a single parent through that period then I got married at 41 and we actually conceived a couple months before we got married and delivered my first son with my first month my husband at 41 and then Had a miscarriage at 42. We wanted my son to have a playmate So we decided to try again and again had that pregnant 42 miscarried about eight weeks in And then about a month or two later we conceived again and Had my youngest son was now seven months at 43 years old So I started the group shortly after I had my first one at 41 and when I got pregnant at 40

MICHELLE JOHNSON: I did what all women do I went on the internet Googled myself into a depression almost because all these statistics, you know starting at 35 You're considered geriatric. You're considered old And I really at that point I started kind of blogging just to myself I didn't put it anywhere if I was terrified that I was gonna have a miscarriage And I didn't want to put everything out there and if something happened or I didn't have a healthy baby so I waited and the pregnancy was definitely different than When I had my daughter at 25, but a week after my son was born at 41 I was sitting in my room. I was nursing him in one hand. He fell asleep I had my phone in the other and I started the 40 Facebook group

MICHELLE JOHNSON: Then and we talked about multitasking. Yeah, right And we are now, two years later, we've got over 5,000 members. We're a group of ladies, so they share everything. It's really a community for women to come together. Again, we have a lot of them who are trying to conceive, thinking about conceiving, who are pregnant, and, you know, women who stay after they've had the baby. They share so many different experiences, because usually we hear about things, like as far as numbers, statistics from our doctors. And not necessarily personal experiences. So women share those things. I've learned so much about pregnancy and pregnancy issues just listening to women in the group that I haven't heard of.

MICHELLE JOHNSON: So things like PCOS, which I didn't experience personally, but I know so much more about now that affects women, especially when you're older. Apparently, that hormone we are lacking, and it decreases, and so a lot of women talk about what they do when they have PCOS, or they're not ovulating, how they can become pregnant, progesterone, that hormone, how that's lacking. And how they fix that, whether they take injections, or they take oral medications. There's big discussions about the NIPT testing for genetic defects, big discussions. A lot of women, they spot early on in their first trimester, sometimes it is a sign of a miscarriage, sometimes it isn't. I'm going to be a hemorrhage. So they talk about just a range of things.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, you have personal experience on both sides.

MICHELLE JOHNSON: Yes. So basically a perfect pregnancy when I was 25, when I turned 40, I was diagnosed with IUGR, which is actually happens more when you're older. So, which is the intrauterine growth restriction. So we were monitored pretty closely because he was ranging in between as far as size, between 8%, 8 and 11% throughout the whole pregnancy. So that was one issue that I had to deal with, with him kind of freaked me out because at one point I went in for an ultrasound and they were saying, it looks like his brain activity, the blood flow through his brain, it looked like he was conserving energy and wasn't getting enough nutrients. So that was definitely something I had to deal with being 40. I had extreme swelling with him.

MICHELLE JOHNSON: You could kind of like, my husband would just like touch my foot. You put a dent in it and it would just stay. It was just horrible. I didn't experience that at all with my daughter, but ultimately everything came out okay. I was induced, I had to be induced right before my due date because he was still measuring small. So they didn't induce me a day early on that one, but he was born healthy.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So when you were 25, I assumed there was no trouble conceiving.

MICHELLE JOHNSON: There was none at all. It was definitely a surprise. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So, yeah, just the various stages of pregnancy. I mean, 25 generally look ages, I think a number that is one factor in your clinical health profile, everything else is also a factor. How fit are you? You know, how's your nutrition? Do you get exercise? Body mass index, things like that make a big difference as well. Do you have any pre-existing issues, conditions, medical conditions? So at 25, you're sort of at peak fertility and generally at peak fitness levels in health. Were you a healthy 25?

MICHELLE JOHNSON: I was, I was at my exercise. It wasn't hardcore, but I did exercise several times a week. I was conscious at time about eating bread and a lot of carbs and junk food. So yeah, I definitely was at the pinnacle of health. I'm conscious about that all the time. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, me too, but sometimes my cravings win.

MICHELLE JOHNSON: Oh no, I do it all the time and consciously it's a different consciousness.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, okay. I would make a horrible pregnancy person. So, I mean, general healthy 25 year old, the trimesters, you know, did you have the typical trimester things that come up, the nausea and vomiting and a little energy in the first trimester?

MICHELLE JOHNSON: I didn't, I didn't have any morning sickness. It was, I mean, it was a smooth pregnancy. I have to say, I didn't start showing until I was like seven, eight months, cause you know, I had like super strong abs then, right? It was chocolate book outside and show until like later on. I went into labor naturally. It was not medicated, not purposely actually had a midwife. I didn't know why it's my first pregnancy.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Where were you living?

MICHELLE JOHNSON: In Atlanta, Atlanta, Atlanta. Yeah. Yeah. So my mindset then was, you know, I didn't know how pregnancy was. I, you know, thought I could kind of like get through the pain

but you know I said I'll go through it as far as I can without medication if I need it then I'll take it you know I try to do things with the least amount of medication intervention as possible so it has my reason for going with the

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: midwife was it a midwife at a hospital or a birthing center at home so it was

MICHELLE JOHNSON: at the hospital my doctor's office I went to they had two midwives on staff so the doctors were there just in case something went wrong I didn't need the doctor in this situation but she was affiliated with an office and so you wanted to live on your own I did I did about 12 hours about an hour in I wanted medication I went to the hospital the only reason I didn't get it was because when we were coming in you were more dilated than me so they couldn't put me in a room and then by the time you know they could find a place for me I had a strong desire to push and it was time for me to deliver it was horrible but the pain was horrible the pain of contractions was horrible delivery was actually fine it was about two or three pushes and the

MICHELLE JOHNSON: baby was out wow so and that's been the case with all of my deliveries that the labels were worse but my last labor with my youngest son was the best and the one with the first son was the worst so in retrospect do you wish

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: you would have been able to get medication for the laboring part before

MICHELLE JOHNSON: pushing absolutely it was it was horrible I was delirious I was I wasn't a lot of pain and I felt like I had an out-of-body experience like I can see myself just like saying crazy things but I knew it didn't make sense in the nurses but it was pretty painful I wish that I would have and you know the third time around I made sure that that happened and it was the best labor

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: ever after knowing experience then you went a long time without having any

MICHELLE JOHNSON: more babies I did I did I didn't think I was gonna have any more oh you thought one done I wanted more but just the situation did not present itself and then you know again I wasn't married I was like I'll never do this again I was a single mother with my daughter never again and then I was approaching 40 and then I was out dating again so most of the men that I met they either had their children they were grown or you know they were just they were done you know happy kids and then I reconnected with my now husband he was 47 he didn't have any kids and he wanted children so you know when we you know were serious serious you know like well I told him I'm 40 so I don't know how good my eggs aren't quite frankly in my

MICHELLE JOHNSON: head I thought he was sterile so because he was older he was 47 he didn't have any kids so I was like well you know we can try you know we weren't like pushing for and I wasn't stressing about it I would just say before we run out to break here you're a single mother but you also pursued a career yes so when I was pregnant I practiced my daughter I just finished my first year of law school and so since that time I went back when she was about a year old finished and became an attorney in Georgia when she was about three yes so I am now in a state planning attorney in Georgia Wow so much

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: to juggle law school by itself seems like a lot and single parenting seems like a lot you know even before any other babies came along you really accomplished a lot and I don't know it's inspiring I feel like I built a business in a practice and I had kids but I also had a wife and I don't know how anybody does it without a wife yeah I will say my parents they

MICHELLE JOHNSON: were 20 years almost 20 years younger than they were definitely a big help you know you just kind of do you know I remember a lot of people saying you know I thought you finished law school but I never thought you finished with your daughter with you because we up and left it went to another state but yeah you just you do what you have to do and you balance and you make it work yeah learn though cuz I said I'll never do it again all

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: right let's take a quick break we'll be right back with Michelle Johnson this Welcome back to the Informed Pregnancy Podcast. We're talking to Michelle Johnson, post-pregnancy after 40. Okay, so how old were you when you got pregnant with your second?

MICHELLE JOHNSON: I was 40. I was a couple months away from 41, but I was 40.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, and so it had been a long time. Did it feel like being pregnant for the first time all over again, or did some of it come back to you like riding a bicycle?

MICHELLE JOHNSON: I remember not one thing. It was totally different. When I went to the doctors, they told me, you know, usually people say things are different, easier. You show sooner with your second pregnancy. It was not that case with me because it had been so long. And they told me it's been so long since you had a baby. It's like you're having a baby for the first time. So it was the way that my body was. First trimester.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: First of all, how did you find out?

MICHELLE JOHNSON: I keep tracking my cycles, and I noticed that I was a couple days late, and I was like, okay, I'll give it a few more days. And I took a pregnancy test, and it was actually the day before Halloween, I think it was. Took a pregnancy test. It was positive. I immediately took another pregnancy test. I had to make sure that it was positive, and it was. And I told my husband, then I was downstairs, and I said, let's go upstairs and I need to talk to you really quick. I had the stick in my hand, and I gave it to him. And I showed it to him, and he was looking at me. He was like, what is this? And I was like, it's positive. And he was just like kind of in shock, but you know, he gave me a hug. And I was like, we're gonna have a baby.

MICHELLE JOHNSON: And he said, I don't have just one child. I have two, meaning my daughter as well. So, you know, we just kind of hugged, and we were both excited and happy. I was really nervous, but yeah. So, he was happy, and I was happy. We were both excited.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Were you nervous when you found out? Like, did it seem to you like, wow, I'm over 40 now. This is gonna be a different kind of pregnancy, or were you just excited?

MICHELLE JOHNSON: I was excited, and it wasn't until afterwards that I went online and started looking about being 40 and pregnant, and then I got scared. I had always felt like I was a relatively healthy person, and that everything would be okay, but then I just like, I Google myself to despair.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And were you now with a doctor or a midwife?

MICHELLE JOHNSON: Doctors the last two times. They didn't have midwives at the practice that I was going to the last two times. So, it was a doctor, the same group that I've been seeing with my general gynecologist.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: How would you compare the trimesters with this pregnancy now at 40, compared to your first one?

MICHELLE JOHNSON: So, the first, the two in the 40s, about a month after my first son, I spotted. And so, I just knew, like, I was gonna miss Gary, because I didn't spot it all with my daughter. And so, it stopped. Yeah, I remember telling my mother, and she was like, well, is this around the time that you normally have your cycles? And I said yes, and she said, sometimes it happens, and I was like, okay. And we literally, it was around Thanksgiving, because we were traveling from Florida to back home, and I was just, like, a wreck, because I saw it when I was at the stop at a rest stop. But it did stop. So, that was something that was different with my pregnancy when I was 42, 43. my youngest son, I bled more.

MICHELLE JOHNSON: By that time, I had already had a miscarriage at 42. So with my son, I bled more and found out that was a subterranean hemorrhage at that time. So those were like two differences I didn't experience.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: As a first, how about the nausea or the fatigue or how your body felt going through the growth and the changes?

MICHELLE JOHNSON: So the fatigue was definitely there for the over 40 pregnancies. And I don't recall that at all with my pregnancy when I was in my 20s. It was like, yeah, I had to take a nap to function. Luckily, I had my own firm at the time and I kind of made my own appointments and so I was able to get naps in when I could. Luckily, you know, thank God for that. I didn't have that choice. I didn't have that choice when I was in my 20s. So yeah, I was working at the law firm but I wasn't an attorney yet. So I had to go through the whole day. But you know, I felt fine. I felt great. I lost weight in my first pregnancy during the pregnancy and you know, these two, I didn't gain much weight but yeah, so I didn't, I never really had morning sickness

MICHELLE JOHNSON: at any of my pregnancies. So, you know, thank God for that. But yeah, the fatigue was definitely there. The bleeding, spotting was there for those. The good thing that I will say about having a baby over 40, you know, people can see it different ways but because you are older, you do have the maternal fetal specialist. And so you're seeing the specialist. And that's actually really comforting because during a regular pregnancy, when you're younger, you have, I think like two ultrasounds early on, maybe one mid-pregnancy and then that's it. When you're older, they're monitoring you all the time and so you're at least monthly in your ultrasound. So you can see the progress. They can see if something's going on, which, you know, was the case

MICHELLE JOHNSON: for both of my pregnancies in my 40s. So again, with my oldest son, I had IUGR. My youngest son, I had gestational diabetes. The first time?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yes. Yeah. I'll get to that pregnancy in a second. In your older son, so your first pregnancy after 40, how did the delivery compare? Is that where you needed to be induced?

MICHELLE JOHNSON: Yes. So we were going in just for a non-stress test and again, the doctor came in, they did an ultrasound as well and they said the baby's still measuring small, which he'd been doing the whole pregnancy. I was induced, so they said, you know, you probably should induce because you don't want to risk something going wrong and the placenta basically deteriorating. They've not getting nutrients so we're struggling by inducing you. So we went straight to the hospital. I was not prepared to do that. My 18-year-old, she was 16 at the time, my 16-year-old was with me. My husband was with me and we just went to the hospital. They did induce me and once my water broke, the contraction started and it was horrible. I was begging for an epidural

MICHELLE JOHNSON: because I had planned to have an epidural based on my last pregnancy and it took me forever. It just took them forever for them to finally give me the epidural. They did give it to me probably after like six hours.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow.

MICHELLE JOHNSON: Once they did, I was okay. The thing was I did get some nausea and I found out it was because my blood pressure was dropping. And they didn't tell me to look out because you have the monitors right next to you. They didn't say, well, if your number reaches below whatever, let us know. And so had I known that, I would have looked for it. I saw the numbers going down but I didn't know what that meant. So my blood pressure was going down. The baby was getting in distress. They did find it so they had to give me something for my blood pressure to come back up. And after that, it was kind of in and out that I ended up delivering maybe like 14 hours later. But initially they gave me, I don't even remember what it was

MICHELLE JOHNSON: but they gave you something to take the edge off. And if anyone's listening, the edge does not come off. They're lying to you. It hurts. So, but the epidural was great. It's just, I just did have that side effect of being nauseous and the blood pressure going down.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Let me ask you this question. The after care, right? All the bending, lifting, holding, feeding, changing. Was that different for you?

MICHELLE JOHNSON: It was, I'll say this. I don't remember this. I remember after having my son, I was on medication. They were giving me pain medication and all that. And I felt really good in the hospital. And I remember when I was being discharged, they said, you know, do you want a prescription for medication? I was like, well, no, I feel fine. I'm good. And we went home and the next day I felt like 12 tractor trailers hit me. I was in so much pain afterwards. And I didn't really, like the nurse didn't say, well, you know, you might feel some pain afterwards. The contract, she didn't say that. She just asked, well, do you want it? And I made a decision based on how I felt at the time.

MICHELLE JOHNSON: and I said well I'll never do that again. The pain was horrible when I got back home, but as far as being able to care for my son, it was fine. They were all vaginal deliveries, thank God. So no tearing with my son. I did actually have tearing with my daughter when I was 25, but none with either one of my sons.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So yeah, that part was fine. Good recoveries. Good recovery. And strong, you know, newborn care. Yeah. Let's do this. Let's take another break. I want to find out about your third pregnancy and more about your platform, Pregnancy Over 40. We'll be right back. Welcome back to the Informed Pregnancy Podcast. We're talking to Ms. Cheryl Johnson. So after your first pregnancy and birth in your 40s, you did it again. Was that a conscious choice? It was. It was. So

MICHELLE JOHNSON: again, like I said earlier, we wanted my son to have a playmate and we decided that because my daughter, she absolutely hated being an only child and I didn't want that for my son and let's face it, me and my husband were old. So you know, when we get out the bed, like it takes us a couple minutes to get up and you know, things will stop cracking. And you know, I just kind of felt like he needed a playmate to play around with. We just like Physically, it is different. You know, the energy as an adult is not there. So yeah, I was definitely conscious about when my son was eight months, you know, I was like, okay, we just kind of, we weren't trying to prevent it. I'm about eight months. I was like, you know what, I'm going to get a

MICHELLE JOHNSON: fertility app and start tracking my fertility and next month we'll start trying. And then I started the fertility app. I was on it for about five days. I put in all my cycle dates and it came up. You should take pregnancy test. Really? So I took a pregnancy test and I was pregnant and I was like, wow, amazing. Unfortunately, I did lose that baby about eight weeks. I had my son, he contracted a virus and we were actually on our way to vacation. When I found out we were pregnant, he contracted a virus. I believe coming back from the airplane, everyone got it. I got it really bad. And I think that actually led to me miscarrying that baby.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Sorry, that's never a fun experience.

MICHELLE JOHNSON: So yeah, but you know, I went through that and miscarried. I didn't need a dance or anything. So I did pass my own. I went back to the doctor and the doctor said, you know, you want to try again? And I said, yes. And she said, well, wait one cycle and you can try again. And we waited a cycle and we try it again. I mean, during that, I put all the dates back into my fertility app and I knew what days I was fertile and you made sure that we optimize our chances of conceiving. And I did. So a couple days before my son turned one, I took a pregnancy test and I was pregnant again. And yeah, we're pregnant again for that third time. And the difference with that one was I went in, you know, they

MICHELLE JOHNSON: give us our glucose test. Early on, I did not pass this time. I didn't have an issue with gestational diabetes with the other two pregnancies. With this one I did. They said I had gestational diabetes. There's an increased chance when you're older, even though I didn't have a history of before I did this. The biggest thing for me with that one was I went to the specialist. And, you know, they wanted me to take my sugars three, four times a day. And that specialist early on wanted to put me on metformin. And because my fasting levels were slightly elevated, when I say slightly elevated, they were about 96 to 101, which wasn't extremely high. But, you know, they're like 100% metformin. And I, you know,

MICHELLE JOHNSON: like I said, I don't like taking medication if I don't have to. And I just really wanted to figure out like, how can I control this on my own? I control all the other numbers with diet. And we really went back and forth about it. And I figured out what works for me to get my fasting

numbers down. I don't even know if I should share this, but I will. You know, I read things and I would read, like I was just trying to figure out what I can eat, take a snack at night to help regulate that fasting level. And I remember reading a thread one time and someone said, well, I would have a piece of chocolate at night and my fasting level would be fine in the morning. And I was like, that lady is lying. That

MICHELLE JOHNSON: cannot be true. So after trying everything else, trying cheese at night, yogurt, popcorn, those things not working, I was like, you know what, I'm going to try a little piece of chocolate, bite-sized piece of chocolate that you hand out like during Halloween. And I had a piece with the Snickers. And the next morning, my fasting level was perfect. And I did it again. And it was perfect. Yes, and so that actually worked for me, you know, don't get like a whole bar, that's really the bite size, but you know, and I'm not saying that's gonna work for everyone, it happened to work for me. And so I got that under control and eventually after a few weeks, the doctors they said,

MICHELLE JOHNSON: okay, just now monitor your levels and your numbers, send them over and but they did not require metformin. So I stopped taking that after a couple days.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So metformin being an oral diabetes medication versus let's say insulin. So for the most part, you controlled it with diet, exercise and a little bit of Snickers.

MICHELLE JOHNSON: Yes. Don't tell anyone that.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Your plan, how to control your gestational diabetes by the Mars company. Yeah. So how was the rest of that pregnancy and your preparations for birth?

MICHELLE JOHNSON: Well, I will say that was the hardest pregnancy physically because it's just gestational diabetes and having to monitor that. And I was fine, but I actually experienced a good amount of anxiety that pregnancy because I did have the previous miscarriage. I did have the bleeding in the hemorrhage that pregnancy. And you know, I'm older and now reading more stories of things that can go wrong. It was, I could not wait for that pregnancy to be over because just mentally it was taxing on me. Every time I went to the restroom, I would always wipe and just look to see if there's blood. I was just terrified the whole pregnancy. And at this point, so we have a couple of thousand members in the Facebook group. And so you constantly see stories.

MICHELLE JOHNSON: You see success stories, you see births, but you also see losses. And one that just really affected me was a young lady in the group and she made it to 39 weeks and she lost her baby. And it just terrified me. And so it was hard emotionally. I went to the doctor, went to the hospital about two times before I actually went into labor because I didn't feel the baby move and I was scared that something was wrong. And I think, you know, maybe that comes with having a previous miscarriage. But, you know, I know I'm not alone because women talk about it all the time in the group, you know, feeling the same way. And they, you know, you're definitely not alone because, you know, your chances of getting pregnant conceived in your 40s has decreased.

MICHELLE JOHNSON: And so you really want these to be successful.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Was this baby, your third baby also growing on the smaller side?

MICHELLE JOHNSON: No, he was way bigger. He was always in the 90th percentile.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So you don't have to worry about that.

MICHELLE JOHNSON: Yeah. You know, it was amazing to see how different their pregnancies were. Yeah. The other one being really small and this one being really big. And so I was scheduled to be induced for him because he was too big. For the opposite reason. Yes. Yes, yes. But this time I, you know, made it very clear what I wanted my birth plan to be. And that was all medication, like all pain medication. And I made it very, very clear. Um, we, we went in a Monday morning.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Like to meet you at the parking lot with an epidural.

MICHELLE JOHNSON: Well, I asked them for it like two weeks before, but they wouldn't give it to me, but that's okay. But when I got in, they, you know, started the process and my nurse, you know, asked me, they had the monitors on. She said, you know, you're starting to contract after about three or four hours. She said, do you want the medication now? And I wasn't in pain. I kind of felt them a little bit. And I was like, I think I can wait. She was like, well, no, you can have it now. You won't feel anything. And I was like, you know what? Hit me. Just, you know, give me that epidural. I took it and it was great. Like I was playing like candy crush on my phone during the contractions. I'm like sending messages, doing videos, so it was great.

MICHELLE JOHNSON: My water did not break though at times. So the doctor had to come in and break my water and I wasn't dilating fast enough. So they gave me pitocin for that one. The pitocin actually started to put the baby in distress. So they had to tone it down from, and then we got to the point where the epidural was starting to wear off. So they asked me like, Hey, you know, want some more? And I was like, uh, I'm not sure. And, you know, my nurse again, you want this pain free as painless as possible. And I said, okay, well, give it to me. She did. And that probably that time was not the best thing to do because then I was dilated 10 centimeters and they were like, okay, let's push. And I'm like, push what? Because I can't feel a thing below my navel.

MICHELLE JOHNSON: So nothing is going on here. So yeah, we had to wait like another hour or two so I can feel something. And I pushed them out. And again, about three pushes and he was out. Um, so that part was fine, but that was, it was absolutely the best delivery because I didn't feel much at all. It was great. You know, they checked his sugar when he was first born. He was a little low. I nursed them and it came back up. So he didn't have. have to go and make you just be able to stay with them.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Just a little Snickers milk. Right. I mean, you know, you talked about people in your group who are in their later forties, are you done now, or is there still possibility of another one for you?

MICHELLE JOHNSON: So I'm still nursing. It's possible. And I say it's possible because I am on a oral contraceptive now. A low dose. A low dose. Yeah. So they tell me it's possible. Yeah. Um, so that's what I'm on now. You know, honestly, at this age, it sounds so crazy. I don't mind having another baby. I just don't want to be pregnant again. So that's, that's the thing. But you know, I literally have been pregnant or nursing since I've turned 40, so 40, 41, 42, 43, like I've been giving my body to another human being and I do want that back.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That seems fair. Yeah. Let's talk a little bit about your platform. So you have a podcast.

MICHELLE JOHNSON: Yes.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And what kind of episodes do you do? Do you have guests?

MICHELLE JOHNSON: Yeah. So basically the women that are in the group, the pregnancy after 40, private group, after they've had babies, I kind of track some of them or, you know, they make announcements in the group and I'll ask them if they want to come on. And so they're my guests. Um, so they join the group while they're pregnant or trying to conceive and they actually have babies. And so they're able to share their stories. Usually each one has some sort of issue. Usually it's an issue that I never had. And so they're able to share that story and that journey with our other listeners. Yeah. And then on the social media, you have a platform where everyone's connected like a community. Um, so we have the group itself.

MICHELLE JOHNSON: So that's the group that's got about 5,000 members now. Um, we have a website as well where we have articles, you know, from the perspective of being over 40 and having a baby. So, yeah, our biggest thing is the Facebook group though.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: But I mean, that's peer support is kind of amazing, especially when you're in a niche group, you know, I have this awkward thing that I was born with called prosopagnosia. I have no face recognition and nobody can really relate to it except other people have it. So when you get on the groups and all of a sudden everybody's life is so similar to yours. And, you know, they have little hacks and things that you can use to get past awkward situations. So I assume it's similar to that in pregnancy over 40. It's, it is different. It's different than being pregnant at 25 as you live through. And, you know, it's maybe not quite as different, for example, as having multiples. We did an episode on twins and triplets and, you know, pretty

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: much all the advice that you get for singleton babies is totally different than the advice, like how you feed them and how you sleep them and things like that is totally different from multiples. And I think there's a lot of that when it comes to pregnancy over 40. I think there's also a tremendous amount of fear mongering and, and like I said earlier, you know, being over 40 is just one sliver of your clinical health profile and you can be very, very healthy. And there are certain specific things you have to keep an eye out for. But outside of that, you can have the most amazing pregnancies and deliveries. So I think it's great that you've put together peer support, a community where people can come together and be surrounded by other

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: people, going through the same things and get advice. Like who would have known that the Snickers nibble? Yeah, I'm going to try that tonight.

MICHELLE JOHNSON: You're trying to get pregnant.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Maybe that'll fix all my, my health ailments. Uh, just a little Snickers at nighttime. Yeah.

MICHELLE JOHNSON: Yeah. The group is great. You know, I was reading a feed today, like one of the things that, you know, other younger women can't relate to is this one young lady was saying, Hey, you're like, I can't even share this on my personal page or tell my friends, my friends are having grandchildren and they think I'm crazy for having, you know, a baby at this age, or, you know, a lot of times family and friends are just not supportive of, you know, a person having a baby in their forties though, but in this group, everyone is supporting you.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And so that's really cool. Yeah. I actually see people sometimes they'll have a bunch of kids, like nine, 10 kids, and they will be pregnant at the same time as their daughter's pregnant. Yeah. So they have a child and a grandchild in the same year, same month. Sometimes pretty funky.

MICHELLE JOHNSON: That was my mom. My mom and my grandmother were pregnant at the same time.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So that sets you up for the situation where your aunt or uncle is younger than you.

MICHELLE JOHNSON: Yeah. I don't call her aunt. I can see her as a cousin. So yeah, same age as my brother. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Uh, Michelle, thanks so much for coming on and sharing your personal stories and also for the work that you do. I think it's really important. Where can we find you online?

MICHELLE JOHNSON: So the website is apregnancyafter40.com. It's border F O R T Y C I T spell out 40. So you can also access podcast from the website and the Facebook group is Pregnancy After 40 private group on Facebook and again you're filling out 40. Amazing. Thanks

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: again for being with us and at home thanks for listening to the Informed Pregnancy podcast. If you'd like to find us online visit us on Instagram at Dr. Berlin. Instagram we'll see you there at Dr. Berlin.

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