Mom Nearly Dies; Twins' Amniotic Fluid Leaks Into Her Blood

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Angela Cottam was in the middle of heavy labor with a set of twins when she suddenly began choking and turned blue.

"I felt like I had a tickly cough," said the 32-year-old elementary school teacher from Flintshire in Wales.

She didn't know it at the time, but the amniotic fluid surrounding the babies in her womb had leaked into her blood system and was quickly killing her. Cottam's lungs collapsed and she nearly bled to death.

Cottam and her twin girls survived, although she spent 22 hours in a coma at Countess of Chester Hospital in Britain. She had a tube inserted into her throat so she could breathe, lost seven pints of blood and needed 22 transfusions.

Her family was told she might not live.

"As I lay in ICU, Peter, my husband, went to hell and back with thoughts about life alone with twins and our 4-year-old daughter to bring up," she wrote in an email to ABCNews.com.

Cottam suffered a rare, but extremely dangerous event in childbirth -- an amniotic fluid embolism, which occurs only in about 1 in 10,000 pregnancies.

The fluid, filled with foreign cells from the unborn babies, traveled to her lung, setting off a quick chain reaction of events that could have led to cardiovascular collapse.

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