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MARCIA CROSS

Her Happy, Healthy New Life



How did **Marcia Cross** overcome infertility in her 40s? In this exclusive interview with *Health*, she reveals the mix of high-tech medicine, positive thinking, and good luck that led to her healthy twins, Eden and Savannah.

On *Desperate Housewives*, Marcia Cross's Bree Van de Camp quickly finds Mr. Perfect, Dr. Orson Hodge, and the two build a family together. Cut to real life: For years, Marcia had searched for the right guy and battled infertility. But during the show's first season, the then-42-year-old met stockbroker Tom Mahoney. They married in June 2006 and, through in vitro treatments, had twin girls, Eden and Savannah, now 13 months old. Here, the Emmy-nominated actress opens up about her struggle to conceive, her pregnancy health scare, and what life's like with twins (crazy, but she's not complaining!).

*By Jennifer Graham Kizer
Photography by Jack Guy*

Health: How did you meet Tom?

Marcia: I was walking behind him at a flower shop, and I loved his voice. I thought, *Oh my God, you're stalking someone, get out of the store!* I asked the sales woman, "Who's that guy?" She said, "Do you want to leave your number?" It's wild—my whole new life got created that day. If that woman hadn't said that, I wouldn't have left my number.

Health: You've said that the years between *Melrose Place* and *Desperate Housewives* were a time of personal transformation for you. How so?

Marcia: When I wasn't getting as much acting work, I went to school and got my masters in psychology. I kept growing and striving and changed a lot internally. Because I got healthy inside, I was able to love a man who was right for me.

Health: You'd struggled with infertility for years. Did you ever get to a point when you thought, *I'll never have kids?*

Marcia: Before I hit 30, I was already longing for kids. But for years, love and marriage eluded me. In my early 40s, I considered adoption, and I tried getting pregnant on my own through a sperm donor, but neither worked out.

Health: Then you got pregnant soon after getting married.

Marcia: We decided to skip our honeymoon and try in vitro after the wedding. I had already been through infertility treatments. It's very, very difficult to get pregnant in your

40s. It's costly and tough on your body and your relationship. Before Tom and I got married, I told him, "I don't know if this is gonna happen." Tom said, "I want children, and if we can't have kids together, then we'll adopt." I wept and thought, *This is the man for me.*

Health: What was your reaction when you discovered you were having twins?

Marcia: Tom and I were deliriously happy when we found out I was pregnant. When we found out we were having twins, I was terrified. As a mother, being outnumbered is scary.

Health: Did you tell anyone on the *Desperate Housewives* set about your pregnancy?

Marcia: You don't want to tell anyone at first. In my biz, news spreads like wildfire. I did tell my makeup artist, Stacy Halax, though. You have to have friends to support you.

Health: Was being pregnant what you thought it would be like?

Marcia: I had really romanticized being pregnant. Then I realized, *This is awful!* I was so nauseated in the beginning.

Health: Did you change how you ate when you were pregnant?

Marcia: I ate so much. You would think it'd be fun, but it wasn't. I was up at 2 in the morning eating steak!

Health: You had to go on bed rest, and then you had preeclampsia. What was going through your mind?

Marcia: I started having contractions at 28 weeks and had to go on bed rest for two months. I was constantly worried that the babies would be born premature. The *Desperate Housewives* crew had to come and shoot in my house. Then, in January, my eyesight started going, and I gained 12 pounds in one week. Both are symptoms of preeclampsia, a complication that is life-threatening for mother and baby. Obviously, that was scary! Within 12 hours of being diagnosed—at 35 weeks—I had a C-section.

Health: But the twins were born safe and healthy?

Marcia: They were huge! Eden was 5 pounds and 11 ounces, and Savannah was 6 pounds and 7 ounces. It's amazing. I'd go through it all again. I don't want to, but I would.

Health: Did it take time to get the hang of caring for them?

Marcia: Eden had trouble latching on, but breastfeeding was the most wonderful thing—so beautiful, so sweet and intimate. I had to stop when Eden and Savannah were

4 months old to go back to work, though. The challenge is with juggling two. When they both cry, I think, *Who do I pick up?*

Health: Did you find it hard to lose the baby weight?

Marcia: I haven't had any trouble, which is shocking to me. Your body doesn't spring back exactly the way it was, though.

Health: You've suffered from migraines for years. How did you deal with them during your pregnancy?

Marcia: I didn't have a single migraine while pregnant. In the first couple of weeks after my girls were born, I had a couple back-to-back because of the hormones shifting. Then they leveled out, and I haven't had any since.

Health: How have you learned to manage your migraines?

Marcia: One trick is I don't drink red wine, which has really reduced my migraines. In the past, it was a "go home, shut the blinds, and you lost the day" thing. But I've found that if you don't eat that chocolate bar or have that red wine, you can really reduce them. I also use Imitrex, which is a prescription nasal spray. With that, I can recover within hours.

Health: How do you de-stress?

Marcia: I used to do yoga and go hiking, but now I'm too busy!

Health: What's the trick to staying connected as a couple once you have kids?

Marcia: If Tom and I are lucky, we try to have a date night. I cherish my time with him—just going to a movie is so dreamy and exciting.

Health: Any plans for more kids?

Marcia: I don't think I'll have any more kids, but I'm not 100 percent sure we won't adopt.

Health: How do you feel about having your kids later in life?

Marcia: I wish that I'd had my girls in my 30s: Then I could be around longer for them. But they're an incentive for me to stay healthy, take care of myself, and live as long as possible.

Health: How has becoming a mom changed you?

Marcia: How *hasn't* it changed me? Your heart just opens so wide. My life is centered around home now. Gone are the days of whittling my time away. I have to be very efficient because I don't want to miss much.

Health: You've transformed your life. What's the secret?

Marcia: You have to work to make a fairy tale come true. Don't sit back and wait for it to come to you. Do everything you can to create the kind of life you want. ●



And babies make four: Marcia says she's happiest at home with husband, Tom Mahoney, and daughters Eden and Savannah, here, at two months.

Marcia's mission to help all women stay healthy

After battling infertility and debilitating migraines, good health is a subject that's close to Marcia's heart. And she's passionate about helping other women get the top-notch care they need. In January, she testified before Congress on eradicating "drive-through" mastectomies, which force women to leave the hospital after breast-cancer surgery before they are ready. "The last thing a woman with breast cancer should worry about is a hospital stay, if she needs one," Marcia says. In May, she turns her attention to skin cancer: For the second year in a row, she'll help Olay and the American Society for Dermatologic Surgery encourage women to get free skin-cancer screenings. (Melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, is highly curable if detected early.) Log on to www.skincancertakesfriends.org starting April 1 to find a participating dermatologist near you.