

I'd never say never to more kids

Claire Sweeney chats to **new!** about motherhood and feeling happy with family life...

Since giving birth to baby Jaxon last year, actress Claire Sweeney hasn't stopped. One of the hardest working mums in showbiz, Claire, 44, was treading the boards in panto (oh yes she was!) in her home city of Liverpool just weeks after having her son, who's now eight months old.

She's also just finished touring a show she co-wrote called *Sex In Suburbia* and is about to play Velma Von Tussle in a tour of the 60s musical *Hairspray*. Phew! You'd think she'd be exhausted but, when we talk to her, she's full of beans!

Motherhood has been a long time coming for Claire, who suffered two miscarriages before giving birth to Jaxon. And although she split from her ex-fiancé Daniel Reilly, who is 14 years her junior, before she discovered she was pregnant, they reunited after Jaxon's arrival.

Here, Claire explains why she went back to work so quickly and gives her thoughts on having more children...

Is it true you went back to work just weeks after giving birth?

Yep, nine weeks after having Jaxon.

Why did you go back so early?

I'd already been booked in for a long time to do panto in Liverpool. Just like everyone else, I have to earn a living and pay the bills. It's not an ego thing putting on a funny costume and going on stage – it's my job.

Did Jaxon come with you?

Yeah, he was with me all the time, which was fantastic. He spent a lot of time backstage in the green room being made a fuss of and it was great stimulation for him being around all that music and the costumes. He absolutely loved it and it's really important for a baby to have constant stimulation. Also, the panto was back home, so I had a lot of help from my mum and my family.

Claire with Jaxon last Christmas



INTERVIEW Ruth Huntman

Has becoming a mum in your forties made it more precious?

Nope! I don't think that because I've had a hard time in the past I can say becoming a mum is any more special. Becoming a mum is a wonderful thing, full stop. It's just a great blessing.

Do you have any tips for balancing being a mum and having a busy working life?

A lot of it is just learning on the job and getting used to multitasking.

You're about to play a mum from hell – Velma Von Tussle – in *Hairspray*. Are you anything like her?

Ha ha! No. I like to think I'm pretty chilled and take things as they come.

Are you taking a well-earned rest before the tour starts in September?

Yes. I haven't really stopped since I had Jaxon, what with

touring my show, and I also did some radio work.

So will you be able to enjoy your first summer with Jaxon?

We're going on our first holiday abroad with him to Mallorca, where I've got a place. But I'm really worried about it.

What are you worried about?

Getting on the plane with Jaxon, remembering to take everything he needs. I'm breastfeeding and he has formula now, so I need to make sure I've got everything covered. But I'll have some of my family with me so it should all be fine.

Would you say becoming a mother has changed you?

Yes. I feel more settled. I've done all the going out in the past and now I don't need that. I'm happy to just sit at home and be with Jaxon.

You once said you were happy with just Jaxon, but would you like more kids?

I think you should never say never.

Would you say you're happier now than you've been for a long time?

Oh, yeah, definitely. I just feel content with family life.

Tell us a bit more about Table Table's Family Tasting Teams campaign...

It's basically a competition for families aimed at getting them together for proper mealtimes. I know it can be really difficult to find the time because everyone leads such busy lives, and I think now we're so used to being distracted by phones, email or the telly that we don't actually sit down as a family any more and have proper conversations. I've always thought having proper family time over meals is important and that's why I've got behind the campaign.

Claire has teamed up with Table Table restaurants as part of their Family Tasting Teams campaign, which encourages families to spend more time together at mealtimes. For more details, visit Tabletable.co.uk/families



Claire reunited with Daniel last October