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YOU'VE GOT TO BE A BIT OF A... THE FAMILY...



DR SHAZIA MALIK, CONSULTANT OBSTETRICIAN AND GYNAECOLOGIST AT THE PORTLAND HOSPITAL FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN, AND MOTHER OF TWO

My patients can go into labour at any moment, so I have to drop everything to be at their side. I'm on call for the NHS, and at the Portland I am on call 365 days a year, even at night, but my girls have trained me well to function when sleep deprived. To really get away from it all, I need to be out of London, preferably abroad, and then, whoever is covering for me will deal with patient matters!

Because I know I could be called away, it makes me savour the time I do have with my family. Nothing beats a smuggling session in bed, but we love going to Christmas fairs, Harrods' Santa's Grotto and *The Snowman* at the Peacock Theatre.

Although we are not Christians, I have grown up having a Christmas tree and presents, and a family lunch on Christmas Day. We have continued this tradition and the children get to spend time with their grandparents and cousins. On Christmas Day, we go out for breakfast – last year, we went to Claridges and the kids were in awe of “the best hot chocolate in the whole wide world”. And they loved the Christmas sweet stall at the

Dorchester the year before.

I grew up in Lancashire, in the days when we had proper snowfalls. Our house overlooked the Pennines, so we would go to the top of Pendle Hill and enjoy the views. Although I loved my childhood Christmases, it is fantastic to stay in London, as so many people have gone away, you can enjoy the city without the usual noise and traffic.

I am so short of time, I tend to go to department stores where I can find everything under one roof.

I love Fortnum & Mason. How much time I have with my family depends on how many Christmas babies are on the way, but I am lucky I love my job.



ABOVE Dr Shazia savours time with her family