



Jaidyn Balogh - 100 Days in the NICU

When Heather Marshall gave birth to her daughter, Faith, nurses had assumed that she “knew the drill.” It was her second child, after all. But, when the nurse placed Faith in her arms just moments after delivery, she was completely surprised.

The experience was completely different from the birth of her son, Jaidyn Andrew Balogh, two years earlier, on August 29, 2012.

Jaidyn had meconium aspiration syndrome, respiratory distress in a newborn who has breathed meconium (stool) into the lungs near the time of birth. He suffered from pulmonary hypertension. His airway was blocked. His body and brain were being deprived of oxygen. Seconds after he was born, rather than placing the newborn in Heather’s arms, nurses whisked Jaidyn away for emergency treatment while Heather remained in the delivery room. He was placed on oxygen and nitric oxide right away.

It would be an hour before Heather learned anything more about her son.

When she did, she had lots of questions. The doctors had few answers to give, but they did tell her that Jaidyn – who suffered a seizure in his first hour – had a 30 percent chance of surviving.

The blockage had been cleared. To help reduce both his temperature and his swelling, Jaidyn was placed on a cooling blanket in MetroHealth’s Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). He was also receiving nitric oxide to help increase the blood flow to his internal organs and brain. Both were new treatments at the time – in fact, it was the first time MetroHealth had used an infant cooling blanket. These new technologies saved Jaidyn’s young life.

Heather recalls having had an eerie feeling throughout her pregnancy. Her boyfriend, Mark, and their friends and family all chalked it up to nerves. But the young mother distinctly remembers looking at the baby shower gifts and knowing that it would be months before she’d get to use them. That reality set in when Heather was discharged three days after delivering Jaidyn, returning to their apartment without her son.

For that first month and a half, Mark and Heather essentially lived at the NICU, existing on coffee and take-out. Once Mark returned to work, he would meet Heather at the NICU following his shift. They’d stay a few hours before heading home at 2 a.m. to sleep, wake and start the routine again.

Jaidyn was released 100 days after his birth. For the next year he was connected to a feeding tube, which caused him to miss the early development stages of eating.

Though he’s considered underweight for his age, Jaidyn is now an active, animated four-year-old. And, for his parents, chasing after him in a restaurant or on a playground is a far cry from seeing him fight for his life in the NICU.

