



HOLLY'S STORY A 23 WEEK MIRACLE

As told by mum Sarah

On the morning of 4 March 2013 after a night of being in pain, at around 5.00am my waters broke. I was rushed to Lower Hutt Hospital by ambulance. The doctor could not find a heartbeat but after one big push at 5.58am our baby was born at 23 weeks, 0 days weighing 640 gms. As she was born so quickly there had been no time for steroids or any prenatal care.

Doctors and nurses surrounded her and one called out that she was a baby girl. She was kept breathing until the Wellington team arrived who intubated her and transferred her to Wellington NICU. I was taken to surgery for an operation to remove the placenta and my husband, was now left alone in the empty hospital room waiting. A wonderful Ambulance driver who was transporting our baby into Wellington NICU found Dave and took him to have his first look at his wee baby.

Once I recovered from the surgery I was transferred to Wellington Hospital and later in the day was finally able to see my baby girl. She was in an incubator, ventilated, very tiny, very red and her eyes fused shut. She was attached to lines that gave her nutrition, drips for antibiotics and monitors with alarms which went off all the time. For someone who had just been through an unexpected birth and operation in the previous few hours it was very daunting.

We named her Holly Blaney.

When I was discharged from hospital our new routine began - I called it my job. We were told to take it hour by hour and she would take a few steps forward and then a few steps back. I was so

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tired and stressed but I kept going. I would drive to the NICU early, then sit at her incubator hoping she would be ok and expressing every few hours. Being in routine helped the days pass. My husband had to go to back to work after the first week and he would come to the NICU at around 3pm. Holly had to be resuscitated twice as her ventilation tube became blocked. It was so terrifying as alarms were pushed and the doctors and nurses rushed in and worked on her. The first time it happened I was so upset I couldn't drive myself home.

For the first five weeks she was very unstable and not strong enough to extubated. At five weeks she was to have surgery on her heart to close a PDA.

The day before her surgery Holly had a photo with Christian Cullen the All Black who had cycled the length of New Zealand for The Neonatal Trust.

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The weeks went by and the ups and downs and stresses kept going. Holly required around 15 blood transfusions and laser eye surgery for Retinopathy of Prematurity because the oxygen that kept her alive had formed blood vessels in her eyes. After 103 days we were transferred to Lower Hutt SCBU. I found the SCBU less stressful as Holly was now stable but it was still hard in a different way.

Taking her home felt so close but so far away and there were days that I was frustrated that I couldn't just take my baby home.

On the 18 August 2013 after 169 days or five and a half months we finally got to take our baby home on oxygen. She stayed on oxygen for a further four months.

She has scars on her hands, feet and body from her journey but she is slowly hitting her development targets and has truly defied the odds. While I was in hospital I was desperate for news of 23 weekers who had survived and done well and now I can happily say that my girl is a happy healthy headstrong toddler.



 Holly and Sarah

ONE OF THE THREE CORE OBJECTIVES OF THE NEONATAL TRUST IS TO AID NEONATAL-RELATED MEDICAL RESEARCH.



This support occurs in a range of ways from direct financial support, to organising research participants, helping to raise awareness, and more.

Neonatal care is a comparatively fledgling clinical field. Supporting research ensures that the very best care is delivered and the long term consequences of prematurity and early illness are better understood. This helps the 5,000 Kiwi babies who are cared for in neonatal units each year in New Zealand.

Learn more at www.neonataltrust.org.nz/support