

Smallest Baby Born at UC San Diego Health

By Michelle Brubaker | November 07, 2013

During a routine prenatal exam at 25 weeks gestation, Laurie Clarke was told she was facing a serious medical complication that would force her to deliver a severely premature baby.

“The medical staff explained to me that I had an underdeveloped placenta that was not providing the necessary nutrients to my baby and putting my pregnancy at high risk. I was immediately admitted into the hospital at UC San Diego Medical Center in Hillcrest,” said Clarke.

Clarke delivered an 11 ounce daughter, named Alexis, two days later via emergency caesarean section. The baby weighed less than a soda can and her head could rest on a fingertip.



“My husband and I were very overwhelmed with emotion,” said Clarke. “All we wanted to do was hold our new baby, but she was whisked away right after birth by the medical team as she started the fight of her life.”

“I was nervous on many levels about the condition of Alexis. We were not sure if she was going to survive,” said Krishelle Marc-Aurele, MD, assistant professor with UC San Diego School of Medicine in the division of neonatal medicine. “But we knew we had a team of specialists and nurses who would go to extraordinary lengths to protect the baby’s life.”

After several challenges and unexpected turns, Alexis started to show signs of hope.

“Several weeks after her birth, we were finally able to hold our daughter. My husband and I consider every day a new blessing as she continues to get stronger and healthier,” said Clarke.



Due to technological advancements within the last several years in neonatal medicine, premature babies are surviving at higher rates.

“Alexis is the smallest baby ever born at UC San Diego Health. Twenty years ago, her survival story would not have been possible,” said Jan Hebert, NICU nurse manager at UC San Diego Health. “Now, we are able to treat the most critically ill and premature babies and watch them go home to live full lives.”

Clarke is hoping to bring her daughter home in the next month or so.

“My family has so much to be grateful for this holiday season. The NICU has been our home for the past six months and the medical staff has truly treated us like family. Our daughter would not be with us today without the team’s expertise and support,” said Clarke. “I just want Alexis to grow up to be happy, healthy and full of joy. It really is true that the love for your child has no boundaries. She is our hero.”

“I look at Alexis now six months old and a little more than seven pounds and get emotional knowing she has come so far. Laurie and her husband are so inspiring,” said Marc-Aurele. “We will miss the Clarke family but will be so happy to see Alexis go home and start a new chapter. It’s what makes our job so rewarding and special.”

In honor of November’s prematurity awareness month, UC San Diego Health recognizes all the premature babies cared for in the highly specialized, center of excellence NICU, providing the highest level of care available for newborns. UC San Diego Health is nationally recognized and the only medical center in San Diego to have both a regional NICU and a labor and delivery service in the same facility.

Watch more of Alexis' story on [NBC 7 San Diego](#) 

Read more stories from our [NICU families](#)

Related Specialties

[Pregnancy and Childbirth](#)

[Neonatal Intensive Care Unit \(NICU\)](#)
