

Karen Oberholster

Hi all

My name is Karen Oberholster. My youngest Kaylee is now 5 years old. She was born at 28 weeks weighing in at a hopping 1.1kg, measuring 37cm. My waters broke in my 27th week and I was put on Ipradol and antibiotics 'cos it was found that I had a strep B infection vaginally (which is apparently quite common, but can kill a baby during vaginal birth). I was also given steroid injections daily for the 5 days I was in the delivery ward (yup that's where they kept me!!)

The strep B got worse and worse and my white cell count just kept rising and the day my 28th week started my gynae said if we didn't do a c/section immediately things would deteriorate. So off we went and little teeny weeny Kaylee was born during a complicated op (my womb twisted and Kaylee got stuck up at the top end, so I was literally butchered to get her out fast!). She didn't make a sound and I was not even given a glimpse of her, I just saw a little black haired lemon sized head being rushed to the NICU.

I was sewn together and given an update by my paed at the time, he said she was in an oxygen box BUT miraculously and THANK YOU to my amazing gynae's steroid injections, she did not have to be intubated! He said her apgars were 1 and 3, and that she had a 50% chance of making it. We had to take it hour by hour..... I couldn't see her, I was bed bound. Hubby took a video of her whole NICU experience and that's the first time I saw her. She was perfect and soooo beautiful. Attached is her NICU pic.

I saw her on my second day, as I had to get up, so off I hobbled to the NICU and touched my angel's hand for the first time, all I could do was cry and keep saying, she is SO SO tiny! The Anne Geddes pic also attached is what size she was then (she was maybe a little smaller).

I was in hospital for at least a week 'cos I was bleeding badly, had to get rid of the infection and I was in agony - worse than my previous 2 caesars (I've got an Android Pelvis). So I was on drugs!!

But she hung in there and was out of the oxygen box 2 hours after she was born and put into an incubator - and that is where she stayed

for 6 weeks. I was there from 8am to 11pm every day - my other children became orphans, but they survived. I was doing everything the nurses would usually do and they thought I was marvelous. BUT that meant I could take her home at 6 weeks (6 weeks short of when they were going to let me take her) she weighed 1.7kg and was still on an apnoea monitor, but I could handle that! She apnoeas quite a lot, which is as all you preemie moms must know by now, is a common thing with prems. She was so little that her head just peeped over the buckle in the carry chair - she was fine except she was not bottle fed at all during her hospital stay - just naso-gastric tube fed, soooo after my first week of her not sucking, I was squeezing the milk down her throat, and she was vomiting it all up! I got frantic, cos she lost weight. The paed did every test under the sun, bariums, thyroid, every hormone and other test under the sun nothing came up as wrong, she didn't have pyloric stenosis and no-one knew why she kept vomiting. By now I had a neo natal icu sister doing nights for me, cos I was kaput!

Eventually at 8 months she was declared failure to thrive for unknown reasons and the surgeon did a Nissens Fundoplication (wrapping of the top part of the tummy around the oesophagus, making the entrance smaller and not allowing anything at all out!), and a gastrostomy tube was put in. I fed her through the tube straight into her tummy and she started thriving, the happiest days of my life I tell you.

Kaylee is now 5 (she still has her nissens and a gastrostomy button), and a year ago, after 2 years of OT, she started eating pureed food. She is still only eating mainly pureed food, but gets brave and every now and then tries some Otees, ice cream, pieces of meat and such. She is still mastering the art of swallowing the food she chewed. (What we take for granted huh?)

But she is doing well, she is petit, weighs in at 15kg - perfect in every way, no medical problems, and the joy of my life. She is the sweetest thing!

Well that is my story in a nutshell (really!)

Heres vasbyt to all you new preemie moms, it does get better, even though you have troughs and peaks, I promise! If there is anything I can do to help, just holler!

Karen (expert medical premie parent)