

Gracie's Story.

Her condition is Tetralogy of Fallot which is a four-pronged congenital heart defect that forces lots of kids to have surgery immediately after birth. We got lucky with Grace. She was eight pounds at birth (October, 2001) and visibly healthy. No scary "blue" spells. They wanted her to put on enough weight to better the odds of her surviving surgery, but they didn't want to wait too long.

On March 23, 2002, she had surgery. It was an eight-hour procedure performed wonderfully by Dr. Terry Davis at Children's Hospital.

There were a few scary moments in the days that followed. Grace had a brain seizure the second day after surgery, and we stood bedside in shock as they pumped shot after shot into her tiny body, covered in wires and machine lines, to get her stabilized. Then they whisked her away for tests and told us they couldn't be sure if she suffered any brain damage.

Four hours later -- felt like four days -- she was wheeled back to her post-op recover room, sleeping soundly. Worst day and night of my life. Never been so scared.

Two days after that, a wise nurse noticed that she was having trouble breathing on her own. Pneumonia. So they inserted a tube into her lung and covered her in a bubble that gave her "hyper-clean" oxygen to breathe. Two days later, she was better.

After four more days in the PICU, we spent one day in a step-down unit, and then we went home. She had a bandage on her chest and one on her side, but needed no medication, not even pain-killers. The neurological exams make them think her brain seizure wasn't damaging. Now we can say with authority that it wasn't.

When she was 18 months old, she stood in front of a mirror, pointed to her chest and said: "Boo-boo!" Then she smiled.

We have a great post-op picture of her if you'd like it: she's covered in wires and surrounded by machines, but has this huge smile and bright eyes. Makes me cry every time I come across it.