

# Jacob's Story

As I touched his tiny chin I thought how just three hours earlier I was sitting at my desk at work. I lay numb from my chest to my toes, and say goodbye to my little boy Jacob. It wasn't supposed to happen this way. My first pregnancy was going to be perfect. A big belly would emerge from my small frame, looking like a lower case "b," as my father described it. But Jacob couldn't wait. He came sixteen weeks too soon.

That morning I felt great. I dressed and left for work wearing a brand new maternity outfit. At six months pregnant, I was finally big enough to wear maternity clothes. My need to use the bathroom was increasing, and during a trip that morning I saw something any pregnant woman would dread- blood. It was only a small amount, but enough to be alarmed. I immediately phoned my obstetricians office. Six calls and six hours later, I went to the hospital. It was the worst day of my life.

At lunchtime I spoke with my husband Brett. He was preparing for a trip to Kansas City, three hours away. His grandmother was ill in

There was no time for pain medication, I was ready to push. It wouldn't take long they told me, since Jacob was so small. But before I held my breath for the first push, a monitor beside my bed alarmed- Jacob's heart rate was dropping. I was immediately prepared for an emergency cesarean section. Just moments before being wheeled into an operation room, my mother got through to Brett. I cried for him to come home, although I knew he wouldn't make it for the birth, it was happening too fast. With an oxygen mask on my face and blood oozing from the IV on my arm, I was prepped for surgery- a major

the hospital, so he was going with his father to visit her. He asked if he should stay home, but I thought things would be fine, so I told him to go. I was wrong.

I arrived at the hospital shortly after 3pm. I was bleeding and in a lot of pain. The staff was so calm, probably because they were trained to handle situations like mine. The calm lasted a short time; only 30 minutes after arriving, a doctor examined me to find that I was almost completely dilated. The calm turned into chaos. I couldn't be dilating, no way! I am only six months pregnant! You can make it stop right?

As I was rushed into a room full of people, my mother tried to reach Brett by cell phone to no avail. I lay still on the drab looking bed as hospital staff swarmed around me. A nurse was at my left putting an IV into my arm, another nurse was at my right telling me to "sign here," and a doctor stood between my legs ready to "catch" the baby. Then a neonatologist entered the room and said more than I needed to hear at that moment. All I heard was "viability," "resuscitate," "disabilities," "fragile," "sick" and "survival rate."

surgery. I was going to lay awake while a doctor cut open my midsection to take out my fragile son.

It was 5:17pm, just two hours after arriving to the hospital, and Jacob was born. My one pound three ounce son was born. We found out he was a boy just one month earlier. I couldn't see a thing when they pulled him out, but my mom assured me he was getting pink. She was trying to comfort me I think, because he could not breathe on his own, his lungs were far too underdeveloped.



Two hours later I was taken to a dim and cold room, but the familiar faces of family and friends warmed it up. I was in a daze from the medication pumping through my body. When a nurse came in the room to check my incision, I looked down



to see a nearly flat belly with a line of staples stretching from just below my belly button to my pubic bone. Staples. I had staples holding my abdomen closed.

I spent the next four days in that hospital bed trying to understand what happened and why. Why my poor Jacob had to come so soon. Why my husband had to miss his birth and why I

wasn't getting any answers.

Four months and two days later, Jacob came home from the hospital. Because of his prematurity, he battled surgery, infection, a dozen blood transfusions, jaundice, and severe Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP), which has left him blind.

Now almost three years old, I still do not know why Jacob came so early, I was told it "just happens" sometimes. No matter what he's been through, he is my miracle, my angel, my blessing. He is my Jacob the Fighter.

