

Conjoined Arizona twins readying for separation

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(AP) -- Conjoined twins from Arizona have already defied medical expectations by living past their third birthdays. Now their parents hope the girls will become one of the first sets of twins sharing a heart to be successfully separated.

Emma and Taylor Bailey, from the San Tan Valley area near Phoenix, were born connected at the chest, sharing a liver and a seven-chambered heart. Most hearts have four chambers.

Their parents, Mandy and Tor Bailey, weren't expecting them to ever leave the hospital.

Emma and Taylor exceeded expectations but now have [heart failure](#). And their parents know the girls must be surgically separated to survive in the long term.

The Baileys have been working with a team at Seattle Children's Hospital for about two years to prepare.

The family said a medical team at the Seattle hospital has successfully separated twins before and is confident it can save both girls, even though it has never separated twins with a shared heart.

The girls had two preliminary surgeries and have a few more to go before they'll be ready for separation and heart transplants. The family hopes all the preliminary procedures will be done by the end of this year.

"It feels like we were intended to go this direction," Mandy Bailey told the East Valley Tribune newspaper. "We don't feel unnerved about it. We certainly understand the risks. We also understand the outcome if we don't do anything."

The Baileys' story has drawn an outpouring of support. The family is gearing up for its second annual fun run fundraiser on Feb. 13. Last year's event attracted 1,000 runners and 5,000 people who attended an accompanying festival with food booths and other activities.

The family will eventually move to the Seattle area to be near the hospital. But for now, Mandy Bailey travels with the girls when they have a surgery or need to visit the medical team.

The most recent visit was a surgery shortly before Thanksgiving. The procedure went well, but there was an added complication when the [twins](#) got swine flu. What was expected to be a 10-day hospital stay turned into three weeks, Mandy Bailey said.

The girls were sedated during the worst of the flu and got home a few days after Thanksgiving, in time for a turkey dinner.

Mandy Bailey said the hospital visits have become "just kind of a normal routine" for her family.

"It's just part of our life right now," she said.

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