

Baby Lake doing fine 5 months after exit procedure

April 9 2013, by P. Solomon Banda

(AP)—Lake Annabelle Hall wouldn't be alive today if doctors at Children's Hospital of Colorado hadn't operated on a cyst on her left lung before she was born.

[Doctors](#) pulled her halfway out of her mother's [womb](#), leaving her connected to her the [umbilical cord](#) and [placenta](#), which served as life support for her while a team of 43 doctors and nurses operated on her.

She is now 5 months old after the [medical procedure](#) for a rare condition that saved her life. Dr. Timothy Crombleholme performed the surgery just before Lake's birth Nov. 6, and last week, Lake's parents got the all clear from Crombleholme.

"No more surgeries," said Lake's mother, Savannah Perry.

"Lake is a normal, healthy, young [baby girl](#) just like any other baby born without any issues," added Lake's father, Erik Hall.

Pioneered in the 1980s, the so-called "exit procedure" and other pre-birth surgeries used to be done only a handful of times per year at major hospitals. Now, specialty centers such as the Colorado Fetal Care Center at Children's Hospital perform pre-birth surgery dozens of times a year.

In Lake's case, Perry's doctor discovered an abnormality during a routine 20-week visit during her pregnancy. Crombleholme examined Perry and soon realized that it was a lung cyst that would keep her from breathing

as soon as Lake was born.

"You could push air in, but it wouldn't come out," Crombleholme said. "She wouldn't make it out of the [delivery room](#)."

Crombleholme decided to wait until after 30 weeks of pregnancy to attempt the surgery to remove the cyst and clear Lake's airway right before birth. Lake's left lung had grown larger than the other as fluid became trapped inside.

Crombleholme assembled a group for the operation to remove the cyst that included teams of doctors and nurses with specialized roles—a team for Perry who would undergo a cesarean operation, a team for Lake while still inside the womb, a team for Lake while Crombleholme operated on her outside the womb, and a team for Lake after her birth.

Hours of planning and meeting with the group were crucial. Once a baby is outside its mother's womb, doctors have only about an hour to an hour and a half to perform the procedure on the fetus.

Once Lake was out of Perry's womb it took Crombleholme nine minutes to remove the cyst and close the gaping incision on her right side. It took another 10 minutes to run a tube down Lake's tiny windpipe to make sure it was clear. Then doctors cut the umbilical cord, marking Lake's official birth.

For her first four months Lake was given oxygen to help her breathe. On Thursday when Perry and Hall visited the center, Crombleholme told them Lake's chest examinations were normal.

"I'm done," Crombleholme said as a beaming Perry and Hall held their cooing baby girl.

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Citation: Baby Lake doing fine 5 months after exit procedure (2013, April 9) retrieved 7 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-04-baby-lake-fine-months-exit.html>

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