

Tiny, premature baby survives birth on a cruise ship

September 25 2015, by Lindsay Whitehurst



In this Sept. 11, 2015 photo provided by Emily Morgan, Chase Morgan holds his son Haiden's hand at the Miami Children's Hospital. Emily Morgan, who unexpectedly gave birth on a cruise ship months before her due date says she wrapped towels around her boy and, with the help of medical staff, managed to keep him alive until the ship reached port. He's now receiving care at a neonatal intensive care unit in Miami. (Emily Morgan via AP)

A Utah woman who unexpectedly gave birth on a cruise ship months before her due date said she wrapped towels around the 1 1/2-pound boy

and kept him alive with the help of medical staff until the ship reached port.

Emily Morgan of Ogden said Thursday that doctors didn't expect her son Haiden to live but strong lungs, makeshift incubator and early arrival in Puerto Rico helped keep him alive. He's now receiving care at a neonatal [intensive care unit](#) in Miami.

Morgan, 28, said the baby was due in December, but contractions began Aug. 31 during the seven-day cruise around the eastern Caribbean. The pregnancy had been uneventful and her doctor approved the cruise to celebrate her daughter's third birthday, Morgan said.

She and her husband initially thought it might be false labor but called onboard [medical staff](#) when they saw blood. A doctor aboard the Royal Caribbean ship told her she couldn't give birth because they were still 14 hours from the nearest port in Puerto Rico.

But holding back wasn't an option. "I knew the baby was coming," Morgan said.

After the delivery, she said, the doctors initially told her she had miscarried and she should get some rest, but she insisted on seeing the baby.

About 45 minutes later, medical staff said her son had survived but wasn't expected to live long. They brought her the baby, wrapped in towels wet from the birth.



In this Sept. 4, 2015, photo provided by Emily Morgan, a medical flight prepares to leave San Juan in Puerto Rico as Morgan's newborn baby is transported on the way to Miami. The Utah woman who unexpectedly gave birth on a cruise ship months before her due date says she wrapped towels around her boy and, with the help of medical staff, managed to keep him alive until the ship reached port. He's now receiving care at a neonatal intensive care unit in Miami. (Emily Morgan via AP)

"He was crying, like a little feeble cry," she said. Along with his healthy pink coloring, it was a positive sign that his lungs were relatively strong.

A baby born so early and so far from a hospital has a less than 10 percent chance of survival, said Dr. Bradley Yoder, medical director of the newborn intensive care unit at the University of Utah.

"I'm surprised the baby survived, to be honest," Yoder said.

As the hours passed after delivery, Morgan insisted her baby be wrapped in fresh, dry towels, and she helped staff members tuck microwaved saline packets around him to create a makeshift incubator.

Meanwhile, the captain of the boat sped to Puerto Rico, and it arrived about two hours early. Two ambulances rushed the family to a hospital, and they were transferred to a children's hospital in Miami a few days later.

Morgan said she was frustrated when officials initially didn't let her see the baby, but she believes they were just trying to protect her. The cruise line has generally been helpful, she said.

Royal Caribbean officials said in a statement that the captain altered course and sped toward the nearest port in San Juan, Puerto Rico, as the onboard medical team worked to help mother and baby.

Haiden is making good progress in Miami, Morgan said, and is expected to be hospitalized until his Dec. 19 due date. The family hopes Haiden will be strong enough to be transported to a Utah hospital in a few weeks.

It's not totally clear what caused Morgan to go into early labor, though doctors have said it might have been related to dehydration.

KSL-TV in Salt Lake City was first to report on the birth.

The mounting medical bills are an issue for the family, and they are accepting online donations to help pay for the cost of the baby's premature arrival.

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