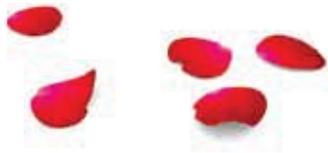


TAKING



HEART

Faced with a difficult diagnosis, parents-to-be find comfort and expert care

For the first three months of Ginny George's pregnancy, everything was picture perfect. She and her husband, Erik, looked forward to the day when they would hold their new baby for the first time. But two summers ago, when Ginny was 12 weeks into her pregnancy, Marquis Jessie, MD, a maternal fetal medicine physician, performed a routine sonogram that revealed possible complications and the possibility of a heart condition.

"I was shocked and then confused because we didn't understand what was going on," says Ginny, who was 36 at the time.

Dr. Jessie referred Ginny to Pediatric and Fetal Cardiologist Jin Park, MD, who performed a fetal echocardiogram and identified that baby Eliza had a heart defect called Tetralogy of Fallot. This meant that her heart had a tiny hole between the lower chambers, and the vessels coming

out of the heart were malpositioned. The defect is typically repaired early in life to restore normal blood flow.

Ginny was immediately referred to the Inova Children's Hospital Fetal Care Center. There a team of highly trained nurse practitioners, nurse navigators, social workers, genetic counselors and pediatric specialists were ready to provide Ginny and her baby specialized care.

"Our family-centered approach allows us to provide the full spectrum of specialized care for both mom and baby, all in one location," says Margot Ahronovich, MD, Medical Director of the Fetal Care Center. "Our caring patient navigators and nurse practitioners guide each family through every aspect of care, from diagnosis through delivery and beyond."

For Ginny and Erik, getting the information they needed from the supportive, knowledgeable team at the Fetal Care Center provided them with the necessary strength and knowledge to get through a challenging time.

"Knowing about the defect while Eliza was still in utero gave us the opportunity to become educated about her particular condition, research all of our options and be able to get an understanding of what was going on," says Ginny.

Run for Kids

It's time for the 11th Annual StarKid 5K and Family Fun Run!

This year, the event will take place on **Sunday, June 4**, at Fairfax Corner Shopping Center, 4100 Monument Corner Drive, in Fairfax. Sign up to walk or run alongside former patients, physicians, nurses and Inova leadership to support the Inova Children's Heart Program. Families, kids and pets can enjoy running or walking, moon bounces, face painting, music and more.

Proceeds benefit the nationally recognized Inova Children's Heart Program. To register, visit inova.org/5K.



FETAL CARE

To learn more about the Fetal Care Center at Inova Children's Hospital, visit inovachildrens.org/fetalcare.

EARLY DIAGNOSIS

At 24 weeks into Ginny's pregnancy, she and Erik were introduced to Lucas Collazo, MD, Medical Director of Pediatric and Congenital Cardiac Surgery. Dr. Collazo reassured them that Eliza's condition could be surgically repaired. With close monitoring and frequent visits with her pediatric cardiologist, they would be able to decide the best management and timing of surgery.

"When a baby is diagnosed with congenital heart disease, the whole NICU team is aware and things are set in motion earlier," Dr. Collazo says, noting that for many congenital heart defects, being prepared is essential for a better outcome.

IN GOOD HANDS

Dr. Jessie thought it was important that Ginny deliver at Inova Women's Hospital. As it is co-located with Inova Children's

Hospital, mom and baby remain in the same facility after delivery. Maternal Fetal Medicine Specialist Ankit Shah, MD, delivered Eliza at 38.5 weeks. She was in the NICU for three days, where Ginny and her husband were encouraged by the attending staff to hold her and feed her. "The staff was wonderful," gushes Ginny. "The nurses were all very kind and attentive, and it was nice to have the support and assistance of a lactation consultant."

Eliza's surgery was scheduled for May, four months after she was born. For four hours, Dr. Collazo and his team repaired the hole in her heart and enlarged the narrowed area restricting blood flow to her lungs, restoring normal blood flow. "Eliza did very well," says Dr. Collazo. "She had a full repair and she was out of the hospital in five days."

The Georges have been reassured that with close monitoring and follow-up by the cardiac team, Eliza can lead a normal life, even while she faces the possibility of a future surgery as she grows. "We were so beyond impressed with everybody," says Ginny. "The surgery team told me that their job was to worry about her surgery and I just had to worry about being a mommy, and they totally lived up to it."

Eliza George, despite her challenging start, is now a typical toddler — talkative and on the move.

A Special Mother's Day

Now nearly 2 years old, Eliza George is getting ready for preschool next year.

"Eliza is a very typical toddler at this point," says mom Ginny. "She walks assisted very well, she scoots incredibly fast and she talks constantly. Everybody who meets her says they haven't met a child who talks as much as her. I forget she even had medical issues."

Mother's Day is especially meaningful for Ginny and her family. This year, to celebrate the anniversary of Eliza's surgery, the family plans to bring toys to the hospital for young patients to enjoy. And some exciting news will make Mother's Day even more special this year.

"Eliza will be looking forward to becoming a big sister in September," says Ginny. "If all goes as planned, the baby will be born at Inova Women's Hospital on the Inova Fairfax Medical Campus, just like big sister Eliza."

