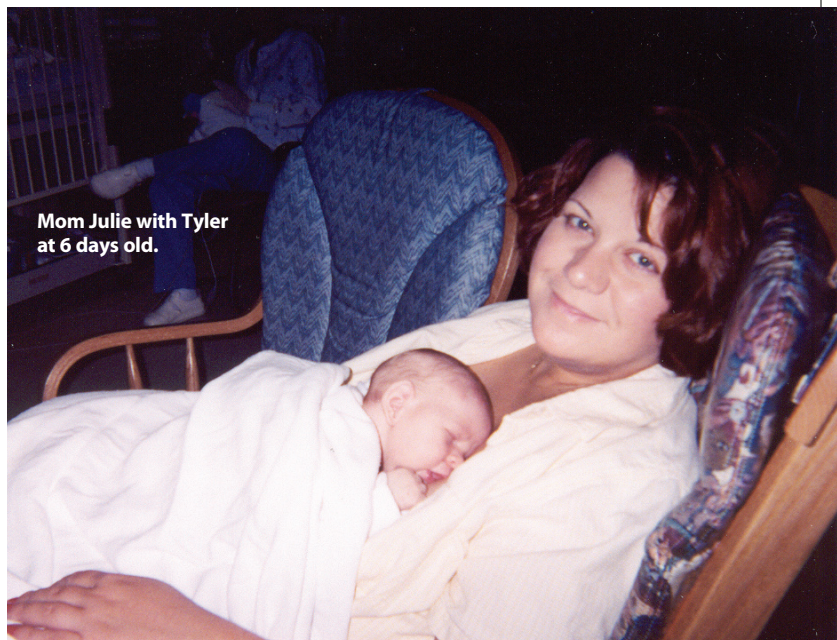


our GOLDEN BOY

A dream pregnancy ends with a “crash” delivery



BY ▶ JULIE AUSTIN

My husband, Brett, and I had been happily married for two years when we decided to start a family. I was off the pill for only one month when I became pregnant. Surprise! The pregnancy was normal and pretty easy. I tried to eat well, exercise, and take my vitamins. We faithfully attended childbirth classes. We even made a practice run to the hospital. Then, I counted down to August 19, my due date. With no signs of labor, we waited...and waited. At 10 days overdue, my doctor admitted me to the hospital for induction.

We checked in on August 30 in the afternoon. A nurse put gel on my cervix to move things along. When she came back, nothing had changed, so she applied more gel and gave me Pitocin. Brett and I settled in for the night. The next morning, after Brett surprised me with a big apple pancake from my favorite restaurant, still nothing was happening. So, my ob/gyn gave Brett permission to go home to meet my parents and sister, get cleaned up, and have lunch.

A short time later, I felt a pop and warm fluid. I figured my water had broken, so I excitedly called the nurse's station. My ob/gyn happened to be on the floor, so he came right away. When he lifted the sheet, he said there was too much blood. The baby's heart rate suddenly dropped to 40 beats per minute, and my doctor ordered a “crash” or emergency C-section. Before leaving to don scrubs, he called Brett to tell him, “You need to get here immediately, but be safe.”

I was rushed to the operating room and quickly put under general anesthesia. My son was delivered within 10 minutes. At birth, and at 5 and 10 minutes, his Apgar score was 0, but the neonatologists revived him. His Apgar score was then 3. He had lost 75 percent of his blood and needed transfusions, a breathing

tube, and a multitude of other interventions to keep him alive.

Meanwhile, my ob/gyn had the difficult task of telling Brett what happened. Brett still does not like to talk about that day. A condition called vasa previa was the culprit; vessels from the umbilical cord had crossed the entrance to the birth canal and then torn during labor, causing the dip in the baby's heart rate.

Although my doctor had delivered 3,500 babies, this was his first vasa previa case. Many ob/gyns never see it in their careers. At my follow-up, he showed me a glass jar full of pink and blue beads that represented his deliveries. He pointed out a gold bead near the top and said, “That one is Tyler's.” He recently told me that every detail is still vivid in his mind, especially the look on my husband's face when he explained what had happened.

Fortunately, Tyler's story has a happy ending. Despite developmental delays, he is a happy, curious, and sweet little boy who loves school, swimming, the zoo, and his little sister (most of the time). He is truly a miracle, and I will remember that always. A special doctor has the gold bead to prove it. ▶

Julie Austin lives with her husband, Brett, and two children in Southfield, MI. It took her five years to write this story.

ABOUT VASA PREVIA

With early diagnosis, vasa previa can be managed to a successful end with a C-section delivery. The likelihood of this rare condition increases with placental abnormalities such as placenta previa, but there are other risk factors as well. For additional information, including how doctors can detect vasa previa, go to ivpf.org.

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Send a 500-word story of your delivery and photos to editors@pregnancymagazine.com or *Pregnancy magazine Birth Story*, 4000 Shoreline Court, Suite 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. Stories will be edited for length and clarity, and photos cannot be returned.