

Sixteen Weeks Premature

John Mone:

Her tiny hand barely fits around her mother's finger.

Haydee Ibarra:

Well, she was, um, 270 grams, well, half a pound.

John Mone:

Believe it or not, Melinda Star Guido was even smaller than this, born sixteen weeks premature because her mother had high blood pressure, a condition which could have killed both Melinda and her mother, Haydee.

Haydee Ibarra:

Yeah, she was supposed to be born tomorrow. Her due date was tomorrow.

John Mone:

Since her delivery by C-section, doctors at Los Angeles County-USC Medical Center have given Melinda around-the-clock care.

Rangasamy Ramanathan:

This is our star baby here. Smallest baby in our unit in the last thirty years, and, uh, nine ounces. Right? How big is the Coke ca-Coke can?

Haydee Ibarra:

Um. Sure.

Rangasamy Ramanathan:

Eight-ounce Coke can! So your baby's just an ounce more than the Coke can! That's what I tell everybody. And, uh, now the baby weighs eight times the weight that the baby was, uh, when the baby was born.

John Mone:

Doctor Rangasamy Ramanathan, better known as Doctor Ram to his patients, says the odds of survival were stacked against little Melinda.

Rangasamy Ramanathan:

I mean, we have had babies at twenty-three weeks, but twen-twenty-four weeks and weighing 270 grams, um, that's a miracle for us.

John Mone:

That's Melinda a few weeks after her birth. She joins three other tiny survivors around the world. She happens to be the third smallest surviving newborn. She's still receiving nutrients through tubes and primarily being cared for in an incubator.

Haydee Ibarra:

She's been through a lot. And she has made it. A lot of people doubted her. She thought- they thought she wasn't going to make it.

John Mone:

Babies born prematurely do face an array of developmental risks down the road, but the short-term outlook for baby Melinda is good.

Haydee Ibarra:

Yeah. She's a little miracle to me. Huh, Melinda?

John Mone:

Her family hopes to have her home by New Year's Day.

John Mone:

John Mone, Associated Press, Los Angeles.

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