

Previously Conjoined Twins Set To Go Home

Brooke Donald, AP

Two weeks after surgery, twin sisters who had been joined at the chest are preparing to leave the hospital — each in their own car seat. Angelica and Angelina Sabuco have been recovering at Lucile Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford University since their November 1 operation. The hospital said Monday that the 2-year-olds should be able to return to their San Jose home in the next couple of days.

"They are recovering very, very well," said lead surgeon Dr. Gary Hartman. "Our goal is to return as many children as we can to happy, healthy lives." Hartman said the girls are off pain medications and their livers are functioning normally. He will continue seeing the girls for weekly outpatient therapy, and they will see a plastic surgeon, Dr. Peter Lorenz, for follow-up procedures. Lorenz said the girls' chest walls have a bit of an abnormal shape but it can be molded as they grow.

Angelina and Angelica also will continue physical and occupational therapy to build up their strength and develop their motor skills, the hospital said. The sisters made their post-surgery debut during a news conference at the hospital Monday. Wearing bright red dresses with bows in their hair and held by their mother and aunt, the girls appeared at ease with the all the attention. Their mother, Ginady Sabuco, smiled and laughed and urged her daughters to wave and say hello as they approached reporters.

"We're so excited now to go home and see them sitting in their own car seats," she said. "We cannot wait to see them playing, walking and running." The girls are sleeping in separate beds, their appetites are growing and they are learning how to walk again. Remarkably, even as they were joined at the chest, the girls had learned to walk but would move sideways. They are now learning to go forward and backward.

"Balance is the biggest challenge," said Amy Weisman, physical therapist. "They are now taking steps with support." The girls' nearly 10-hour surgery, paid for by the family's health insurance, was the second such successful operation at the children's hospital in Palo Alto. Within 72 hours of the surgery, both girls were breathing on her own. Within a week, they had moved from intensive care to a regular hospital room. A team of more than 40 doctors, nurses and hospital staff took part in the case.

Ginady Sabuco said when the girls woke up after surgery they looked around and called out "mama." At that moment, she said, "all the hardships went away."

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