

1 in 2,500

At a glance:

- M is having skull surgery next week 😞

Have you heard of *craniosynostosis*?

It's a birth defect where bones in a baby's skull fuse together prematurely. Since her birth we have noticed that M's head seemed to be unusually long, but we thought perhaps it would go away after a few days. As M continued to grow it seemed to be getting worse and not better. R did some google-ing and came across pictures of babies' heads that looked remarkably similar to M's. We got in touch with our pediatrician who referred us to a neurosurgeon and, praise the Lord, we were able to be seen just a few days later for an evaluation. The neurosurgeon immediately confirmed what we had suspected - M was born with *sagittal craniosynostosis*. Around 1/2500 babies have some form of craniosynostosis and surgical correction is generally the recommendation.

Because M is less than three months old she is eligible for a less invasive surgery that will remove some areas of fused bone, allowing the skull to expand as it should. A few weeks after her surgery she will be given a helmet to wear 23 hours/day for at least six months to help her head develop into a healthier shape.

Praise the Lord that we have already been able to meet with two pediatric neurosurgeons who 1) affirm surgery as the best route and 2) speak English. We're glad to be going through this process while still living in Our city - otherwise we'd likely be making trips to and from the city every other week for a few months. We're really sad that M will have to go through surgery, but we can see God's hands over the process already.

Some forms of this birth defect are syndromic and are related to underlying genetic conditions and can come with a host of developmental delays and other disorders. **It seems that M's is non-syndromic**, and although there's a potential for minor delays it is considered a random defect - although we know that it is far from random. For a good reason, God decided to create M this way and decided for us to walk through this as a family. He intentionally and without any mistakes knit her together in R's womb - although we do joke that maybe he knit her skull just a tad too much 🙏

M's surgery has been scheduled for next Thursday, August 4. They want us to be at the hospital one day before the surgery and for a few days afterward. If everything goes smoothly they hope to discharge M on Saturday.

Please pray for us. It has all happened *very quickly* and it's a lot for us to process. Pray for the procedure to go smoothly. We are grateful that it is a surgery with a high rate of success, but of course the proximity to the brain is a bit *unnerving* for us. We'd love prayer

against any brain or skull damage, for a quick recovery, and that M would not need any additional corrective surgeries down the road. Please pray for our hearts to be calm and that the Lord would be our refuge in times of fear, anxiety, and feeling out of control. Pray that the Lord would use this situation to make his name great in our lives and the lives of those around us. And please pray for J as she now also really wants a special helmet - so we'll have to figure that out...

As you can imagine, M's surgery has definitely been at the forefront of our minds but we have still had sweet times with neighbors and have even made a few new relationships that we're really excited about! We are **loving** life here and are so grateful for the opportunity to live among these people who God so desperately loves. Here is a quick glance at some other highlights from the past month and a half:

- A has jumped back into language classes
- We took a vision trip to a city three hours north where a new team will be launching soon
- We've had several encouraging conversations with potential future team leaders
- God continues to provide local relationships - we've made some great friends!
- We traveled far out east for a friend's wedding where we were incredibly humbled by their radical hospitality
- A's sister and her husband visited us for a week - we had a blast hosting and showing them around!
- J will be turning TWO on August 27! 🎂

I know we say it a lot...but it's because we mean it a lot: **THANK YOU** for taking the time to read these updates. All of the messages, comments, and prayers are deeply encouraging to us. We wouldn't be here without you all.

Grace and peace,
A+R+J+M