

Identical 'micro preemie' twins get life-saving procedure at Banner Children's

Boys born at just six months gestation recovering well after heart defect



Garrett Lopez

Video and photos: Broll video is [available here](#).
Photos are at the bottom of this release.

MESA, Ariz. – Born premature at just over six months gestation, identical twins Garrett and Carter Lopez were so tiny their combined weight was less than most normal newborns. The delicate “micro preemie” brothers came into the world fighting for their lives.

“ Just two years ago, this same life-saving treatment would have required open-heart surgery ”

At several weeks of age, the medical team at [Banner Children's at Desert](#) determined both boys needed a highly precise procedure to fix a life-threatening, congenital heart defect that could lead to heart failure and other major issues.

So much has happened since the babies were delivered by emergency C-section on Dec. 20. Garrett weighed just 2 pounds and 2 ounces, and Carter was 2 pounds and 4 ounces that day. Now it's safe to say they're on the road to recovery after the unique procedure to treat patent ductus arteriosus, or PDA, one of the most common defects in premature babies.

Infants born with PDA have an opening between two blood vessels leading from the heart which fails to close the way it normally does for most babies shortly after birth. This makes it difficult for them to breathe normally, because of increased bloodflow to the lungs.

“Just two years ago, this same life-saving treatment would have required open-heart surgery,” said Dr. Miga, a Banner Children's pediatric cardiologist. “Medical advancements have given us the ability to treat this birth defect with a minimally invasive procedure that is helping them heal much faster than they otherwise would have.”

Before the procedure, Garrett and Carter had very rapid heart rates of about 200 to 210 beats per minute. Garrett was also bleeding in his lungs.

Using a small needle, Dr. Miga placed a micro-thin guidewire into tiny blood vessels in the leg. Ever so carefully, he guided the wire through veins as thin as a ballpoint pen's tip, moving it all the way to each baby's heart. Attached to the end of the wire was a miniature device used to carefully seal the opening.

Unlike an open-heart surgery, the procedure leaves no scars, said Dr. Miga, who also treats adult congenital heart disease.

“They're both doing great, and Garrett has almost doubled in size since birth,” said their father, George Lopez, 30, of Mesa. “They're still recovering, but making good progress. They've been through a long journey.”

One out of 100 children are born with heart defects, or roughly 40,000 babies in the U.S. each year, according to the American Heart Association.

Lopez and his wife, 31-year-old Nicole, have been visiting the infants every day in the Neonatal Intensive Care unit at Banner Children's. With twins, both parents are allowed to visit, even during COVID visitor restrictions. The boys, who are the Lopez's first children, are expected to be treated in the hospital for another month. They weren't originally due for delivery until March 21.

“We'll never forget the doctors and nurses in the NICU,” Lopez said. “It's a blessing to have them.”

The Banner Children's cardiac program cares for patients from fetus through adulthood.

Services through Banner Children's at Desert include immediate access to Level I trauma services and emergency care, a Level III neonatal intensive care unit, general pediatrics, surgical and rehabilitation services, hematology/oncology, urology, gastroenterology, neurology and outpatient services. For more information, visit bannerhealth.com/bannerchildrensatdesert.


For further information: media@bannerhealth.com

 [**Carter Lopez, December 2020**](#)
(211 KB)

 [**Carter Lopez, recent photo**](#)
(240 KB)

 [**Garrett Lopez, December 2020**](#)
(439 KB)

 [**Garrett Lopez, recent photo**](#)
(175 KB)

 [**Lopez family in NICU**](#)
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 [**Abbott Piccolo device closure animation**](#)
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 [**Lopez twins, recent photo**](#)
(464 KB)

https://stage.mediaroom.com/bannerhealth/NICU_twins