

Patient testimonials

No stopping her now

A seamless team approach helped premature Meghan survive, and thrive, after a number of lifesaving surgeries.



Meghan's mom calls her middle child her "miracle baby."

With her bouncy red curls and sunny disposition, 7-year-old Meghan Fogarty has a big personality. The outgoing little girl started Irish dancing at age 4, but now also enjoys ballet and tap, and playing soccer, too.

"I look at her now and think, 'Wow, what did we go through?'" said her mom, Karen, of Commack, NY. "I call her my miracle child."

Karen's pregnancy with Meghan, her second, was mostly routine, but her obstetrician was monitoring some excess fluid. On a snowy February day at Karen's 35-week checkup, the baby's heartbeat was slower than expected. The doctor sent her to nearby [South Shore University Hospital](#), where Karen had an emergency cesarean section. Before Karen and her husband, John, even had a chance to hold their daughter, the doctor was intubating the newborn. Clearly, something was wrong. The team swiftly transferred Meghan to [Cohen Children's Medical Center](#).

Meghan was diagnosed with tracheoesophageal fistula (TEF), an abnormal connection between the esophagus (the tube that carries food to the stomach) and the trachea (windpipe). She also had esophageal atresia (EA), a defect in which the esophagus is separated into two different sections. Both would need to be repaired quickly, so when Meghan was just one day old, pediatric surgeon [Andrew Hong, MD](#), performed the complex surgery to fix both the TEF and the EA. "We were terrified, but I've always heard wonderful things about Cohen Children's. Dr. Hong answered all our questions," said Karen.

The Fogartys soon learned that this surgery was just the first step; many EA/TEF patients also have other birth defects, and that proved true with Meghan. She was also born with ventricular septal defect (VSD)—holes in the wall between the two lower chambers of her heart—and a vascular ring, in which her aorta, the artery that carries blood from the heart to the rest of her body, had formed improperly and created a ring around her esophagus and trachea. The Fogartys began seeing [Rubin Cooper, MD](#), a pediatric cardiologist at Cohen Children's.

"I loved Dr. Cooper from the beginning," said Karen. "He always made us feel comfortable." Both Karen and John appreciated how the entire team at Cohen Children's worked seamlessly to ease their worries.

Though the VSD made Meghan's breathing difficult, that repair had to wait until she was older and stronger. Meghan spent the first three months of her life in the [neonatal intensive care unit](#) (NICU). Karen spent her days in the NICU, driving home in time to meet her older child's school bus. Even though the days

Meet our doctors



Rubin Seymour Cooper, MD



David Benjamin Meyer, MD

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were hard, "I felt at ease leaving her when I had to go home. I knew she was in the best hands," said Kareen.

In April, [David B. Meyer, MD](#), a pediatric cardiothoracic surgeon at Cohen Children's, performed open-heart surgery to close the holes from the VSD and open the vascular ring.

"After the surgery, she had so many machines and wires hooked up to her, and she was so tiny," said Kareen. "But still, her color came right back. She looked so much better, right away."



Now 7 years old, Meghan's enjoying life as an active kid—she loves sports and dancing.

Over the next three years, as Meghan grew into a lively preschooler, she saw Dr. Cooper and other specialists at Cohen Children's regularly. Even as her daughter appeared to thrive, Kareen noticed that Meghan often had trouble fighting off colds. Soon after Kareen gave birth to her third child, Meghan contracted respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and ended up in the hospital. Tests revealed an airway compression from an abnormally dilated portion of the aorta—often seen with vascular ring—but not easily accessible in the first cardiac procedure. The team agreed that it was necessary to repair the aorta, which was done successfully by Dr. Meyer along with a bronchoscopy during surgery, which showed that her airway was normal.

Since that surgery, it's been smooth sailing for Meghan. "We were wondering if this would hold her back, but nothing seems to do that," said Kareen. "She's been through a lot—I love to see her running around the soccer field with no problem."

These days, Meghan is just beginning to notice the scars on her chest. Her mom explains in simple terms how a whole team of doctors and nurses at Cohen Children's saved her life, even as Kareen's own memories of the traumatic experience are fading.

"Seven years have gone by, so it's good that I'm starting to forget some of it," said Kareen. "I just appreciate what they've done. I owe them my daughter. They gave me my daughter."



Goal! The way she runs around the soccer field, you'd never know Meghan had multiple surgeries.

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