

# The Truth About Congenital Heart Disease and How Emery Knudson Is Celebrating Life on Wear Red Day

*Emery Knudson was born with tricuspid atresia, a severe form of congenital heart disease. Her parents, and their supportive community, are heroes with heart.*

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When you are in crisis mode it is so important to have a support system, that understands the challenges you are facing”

*Dallin Knudson*

National Wear Red Day which promotes awareness of heart disease prevention strategies in alliance with The American Heart Association. While many cardiovascular diseases are preventable and thought of as afflicting older adults, the truth is that congestive heart failure (CHF) presents in newborn babies. In fact, congenital heart defects in infants are the most common type of birth defect. This translates into the fact that [1/120](#) babies are born with congenital heart failure.

CHF is a curve ball no parent expects.

The journey to parenthood is a rollercoaster of emotions. Pregnancy provides parents with an emotional landscape that teeters between excitement and nerves. While the regimented protocol of prenatal care can soothe nerves, no parent is ready to receive the devastating news that their baby is suffering from Congestive Heart Failure (CHF).

One out of every 120 babies in the United States is born with heart disease, making it the most common congenital disability. Congenital heart disease occurs during the early stages of a mother's pregnancy and can cause abnormalities in the heart's structure or electrical system.

The Knudsons, a young energetic couple in Salt Lake City, Utah, met all their pregnancy milestones with flying colors. Unfortunately, [Dallin](#) and Tawnymara Knudson were about to receive heart-wrenching news that the prenatal testing failed to detect. Their daughter had a severe malformation of her heart.

Tawnymara, now 30, fondly recalls her ability to ace ultrasounds and coast through pregnancy

protocols with ease. “My pregnancy with Emery was perfect, there were no signs of anything wrong”. Everything was perfect until Emery’s second day of life”.

The keen eye of Knudson’s midwife was the tip-off to Emery’s life-threatening health condition. Emery’s oxygenation levels were below the normal range which was the catalyst for the midwife insisting on emergency care.

Nurse after nurse and doctor after doctor reassured the young couple that their daughter was healthy. Eventually, they met with a pediatric cardiologist who diagnosed the baby with tricuspid atresia.

Tricuspid atresia is a congenital heart defect that occurs when the tricuspid valve, which separates the right atrium and right ventricle, is absent or not properly formed. As a result, blood cannot flow from the right atrium to the right ventricle, and the right ventricle is unable to pump blood to the body effectively.

In newborns with tricuspid atresia, the lack of proper blood flow can lead to congestive heart failure (CHF), decreased oxygen levels, and other serious complications. Symptoms of tricuspid atresia in newborns may include rapid breathing, poor feeding, fatigue, and changes in skin color.

Emery, a feisty two-day old had a tough road ahead of her. This path included open heart surgery at 7 days old and a heart transplant at 6 months old.

Emery’s father, Dallin, was gripped with the consistent stress of supporting his wife and daughter while starting a new job at the tech company [Kennected](#). “I knew my priority was to support my wife and child, but I had to support this family financially as well.” Dallin confides, “Without the support of my company and my team at Kennected- things would not be the same.”

Dallin adds, “When you are in crisis mode it is so important to have a support system, like my company Kennected and like the wonderful team at the Ronald McDonald House. They were there for my family- and this eased my worries and allowed me to be where I needed to be with my wife and Emery”.



3-year-old Emery Knudson is celebrating life today on Wear Read Day!

New mom Tawnymara understood the need for support during her daughter's health journey. "The incredible acts of support my husband received from his company made a difference in our mental health. We didn't have to worry about money or his job or anything—we could focus on our baby girl and that was so important".

Despite her medical challenges Emery's smile is infectious. Emery, a precocious 3.5-year-old, is a whimsical little girl, who proudly shepherds her little brother Enzo around. Emery loves dancing, and the outdoors and especially delights in swimming.

Emery faces a maze of obstacles, and no day is taken for granted in the Knudson home. With the vigilant support of those that love her, her life is a powerful testimony to resilience.

About Tricuspid Atresia:

Tricuspid Atresia is a type of HRHS. HRHS is hypoplastic right heart syndrome.

Treatment options for tricuspid atresia in newborns can include medications, surgery, and lifestyle changes. Early detection and treatment of tricuspid atresia and CHF in newborns can greatly improve outcomes and quality of life. It's important for parents and healthcare providers to be aware of the signs and symptoms of tricuspid atresia and CHF in newborns, and to seek prompt medical attention if they suspect their child may be affected.

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