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Family healthy after high-risk pregnancy of quadruplets, mother's cancer

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Posted: Thursday, April 11, 2013 1:21 pm | Updated: 3:39 pm, Thu Apr 11, 2013.

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Posted on April 11, 2013
 by [Melissa Flores](#)

Connie Cooklin's Hollister home has been full of family members since her daughter Ashley Adams arrived for a visit with her quadruplets at the end of March. The babies – Samantha, Rylie, Braelynn and Wyatt – are 7 months old and they are beginning to scoot around their grandmother's house.



Lora Schraft/Chief Photographer

The visit is a chance for family and friends who have not been able to visit the family where they live in Colorado, but it is also a chance for Cooklin and Adams to share positive news on the new mom's battle with cancer.

As doctors closely monitored her during the high-risk pregnancy, they discovered Adams had thyroid cancer. She underwent surgery shortly after she had the babies, but doctors notified the family last fall that there were still traces of cancer in her body.

She received radiation treatment in February and was recently informed that there are no signs of cancer outside of her neck.

"They want me to go back for a check-up in six to nine months, but it's good news," she said.

When she received the radiation therapy, she couldn't be with the babies for a week. She stayed with her husband Andy in a hotel on the military base where they live while her mother and other relatives watched the babies.

"I looked at them through the window," she said, noting how hard it was not to hold the babies for a week.

She said she could tell her health was improving pretty rapidly after the radiation treatment.

"After a couple of days, I started feeling like a different person," she said.

Quadruplets

Ashley Adams lays down with her quadruplets, clockwise from left, Rylie, Wyatt, Braelynn and Samantha, born August 26, 2012.

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Adams said she has been fortunate to have a lot of support during her pregnancy and since the babies were born. Her mother and younger sister Emily Cooklin, who is in middle school but has been in independent study, have been able to visit for extended periods. Her aunt Casey Heen also went to Colorado to help.

Though her husband often has been scheduled to be away for training or for work obligations, his commander gave him the time off to be with his wife during her radiation treatment. He's also been helpful when he is not away for work. Adams said he cooks for everyone else in the house so they can concentrate on taking care of the babies – including breakfast in bed.

Family and friends in Hollister orchestrated a bake sale in February to raise money for formula and other supplies the family needs. The babies are allergic to a milk protein so Ashley couldn't breast feed them. The family goes through two cans of a special formula a day that costs \$30 a

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can. The local chapter of the American Legion has made ongoing donations to the family. Members of her husband's unit have also helped out at the home.

A neighbor of Cooklin contacted the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in Aurora, Colo. near where the family lives to recruit volunteers to help the family.

Heen recalled an elderly couple who offered to volunteer for an hour who ended up staying for four hours. The gentleman cleared their walkway of snow and then offered to change one of the baby's diapers.

Adams said they appreciate all the support from the community here and in Colorado.

Cooklin and Adams have had plenty of helping hands since they returned to Hollister for Adams' visit as aunts, cousins and other extended family have been recruited to meet the constant needs of four babies. Cooklin's sister and Adam's

aunt Pamela Sexton, along with Heen, have been fixtures at the home since they arrived.

"They've been great helpers," Cooklin said, of her nieces and nephews. "They are not even afraid to change diapers."

On a recent afternoon, Wyatt and Samantha played with some toys on a blanket in the front room of their grandmother's home while Braelynn and Rylie finished a nap.

"They are very healthy," Adams said. "With everything they went through they weren't supposed to survive. But everybody is healthy."

Adams, who gave birth on Aug. 26 in Colorado, where her husband Andy is stationed with the U.S. Army, said doctors expressed concerns early on over her carrying all four babies to term. In addition to fraternal twins Wyatt and Rylie, the identical twins Braelynn and Samantha shared the same amniotic sac, which can lead to additional risks.

Adams said they have been monitoring the babies' developmental milestones and so far each of the four are in the expected range for premature babies – between their adjusted age of 4 and a half months and 7 months.

"They've been very close to meeting the 7-month milestones," she said, noting that the girls are still on the smaller side.

Wyatt is the biggest of the babies, at 16 pounds, while Samantha is the smallest at 12 pounds. Braelynn and Rylie weigh about two pounds more than Samantha.

Even with all the family help, Adams has had a few stretches without an extra set of hands at home.

"When my mother and aunt are gone, the laundry doesn't get done," she said. "She was gone for two and a half weeks and I thought she was gone a month."

She said she learned quickly to let the babies self-soothe because it is impossible to calm them all down when they are all crying by putting them down in a crib.

"Most of the time when they are fussy they are tired anyway," she said.

Even at such a young age, the family members said they can see different personalities emerging in the babies. They referred to Samantha as a "firecracker." They said she is the most vocal of the babies and "likes to be bossy." Rylie is the mellow one, who they picture as being a mediator with her siblings down the road.

"Braelynn is our bubbly one," Adams said. "Wyatt is all boy. He likes to eat and likes to make people laugh. I don't know anything different, but everyone tells me they are good babies."

Since she arrived for the visit, Ashley has been exposing the babies to plenty of new experiences, such as a trip to the beach and a visit to a stable with horses. She plans to come back this summer in late September to celebrate the babies' 1st birthday.

For now she appreciates the extra hands at her mother's home.

"We always talked about having a big family, just not all at once," she said.

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