

MOM TIESHA

At nine months, Elisa is a crawling, babbling, cooing, healthy and happy baby. But the path to all this unabashed delight was far from carefree.

Tiesha's case was high risk from the start. She has chronic high blood pressure and a history of depression, so she needed close medical supervision to protect her own health and ensure a safe pregnancy.

Tiesha was referred to Nurse-Family Partnership at the Houston Health Department where she met Kimberly, a specially trained NFP nurse who has been helping first-time moms through the challenges of pregnancy and new motherhood for five years.

Tiesha's case was complex, but hardly out of the ordinary.

"That's what we do," said Kimberly.

She monitored Tiesha's blood pressure continuously throughout the pregnancy, working with Tiesha from week to week so she would communicate effectively with her doctor to adjust her medications as needed. She also kept a close eye on Tiesha's psychological wellbeing, especially after one of her cousins died suddenly on a football field and the trauma seemed overwhelming.

Kimberly was able to draw on the resources at Nurse-Family Partnership to arrange counseling for Tiesha, and her physician prescribed additional counseling to help her through the experience.

Still, despite all the medical attention and support, Tiesha's blood pressure spiked dangerously in the third trimester. "There's only so much we can do," Kimberly said.

So, Tiesha's doctor induced labor at 32 weeks and tiny Elisa was born nearly two months early.

Elisa was in the hospital for three-and-one-half weeks with a breathing mask and a feeding tube, and needed extra attention when she came home.

"It was hard," Tiesha said, "but now she's a good eater and a good sleeper. She's 17 pounds and she's a lot of fun."

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If her medications make her drowsy, Tiesha knows to tell her doctor and request adjustments so she has the energy she needs to keep up with an energetic developing toddler.

Through it all, Tiesha has become a great mom, Kimberly said. “Despite all the challenges she’s faced, she’s very resilient. She’s attentive and loving, and has a good bond with the baby.”

With the support of her husband, her family and NFP, Tiesha considers herself very lucky.

“I love my little munchkin,” she said.

Tiesha is an NFP graduate from the Nurse-Family Partnership program at the Houston Health Department.

Kimberly continues to keep a close eye on Elisa, teaching Tiesha about milestones to anticipate and ways to stimulate normal development. Little things like encouraging an infant to jump on a mother’s lap to boost leg strength and actively responding to cooing and babbling to build language development have given Tiesha the confidence she needs to nurture a delicate preemie.

“I have learned a lot about what to expect,” Tiesha said, “and we have become good friends. Every time Kimberly comes, Elisa smiles.”

Kimberly continues to help Tiesha and teach her to advocate for her care. She has taught her how to communicate with her doctor, and Tiesha follows through on Kim’s suggestions for how to get the best care possible.

