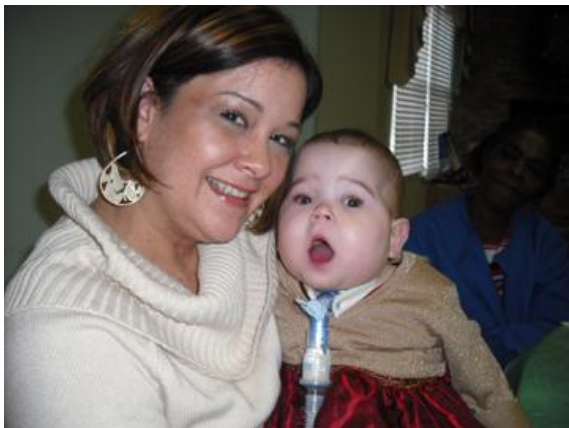


# A family's perspective

## Isabella Marie Rivers' story

Isabella Rivers is one of the 5,000-10,000 infants born annually with bronchopulmonary dysplasia (BPD) – a condition that is associated with premature birth that causes abnormal development of lung tissue. Born three months premature, Isabella weighed only one-pound, six ounces. She spent the first 11 months of her life in a hospital where she underwent a battery of procedures, including open-heart surgery to repair two holes in her heart.

Now at 19-months-old, Isabella is a typical toddler even though she requires a ventilator and oxygen to support her breathing. To accommodate her curiosity and active nature, Isabella's father built a wheeled cart for the equipment. Isabella can take baths, easily get into the kitchen and is mobile within the house. When the family goes for walks or on errands, Isabella and her equipment ride in a double stroller. Right now, the oxygen tank and ventilator weigh almost as much as Isabella.



Despite the challenges, Isabella's family is committed to her experiencing all that life has to offer. They recently took her to the beach so that she could play in the sand. The equipment can be prohibitive. Heather explains, "sometimes we stay at home because it is easier."

The daily challenges of caring for a medically fragile child are immeasurable; simple, everyday tasks such as bathing and going for a walk or to the store can be difficult. Isabella's mother, Heather, feels that lighter, more simplified equipment would make their lives easier and help her daughter remain active.



Isabella with her life-support equipment



Isabella (and her equipment) in her special wagon for gardening in the yard



Isabella with Santa Claus