



Brandy Heck is #GeisingerGrateful

A mother's intuition is a strong feeling. Brandy Heck, of Linden, Pa., works in healthcare and she just knew there was something wrong with her 5-year-old daughter Amanda. One evening in the fall of 2017, Brandy was getting Amanda out of the bathtub and ready for bed, when she noticed what she immediately suspected was an inguinal hernia. This condition, which occurs when soft tissue bulges through a weak point in the abdominal muscles, is not uncommon, but is rare in girls.

Brandy made an appointment with their pediatrician, Dana Smith, DO, at Geisinger Lock Haven. Dr. Smith confirmed Brandy's fears.

"Surely, this was one of the few times a parent wishes they were wrong," Brandy said. Dr. Smith told Brandy that this hernia would probably not go away on its own, and referred them to Christopher Coppola, MD, at Geisinger Medical Center for a surgical consult.

Dr. Coppola said it was likely that Amanda had been born with the hernia. He then shared some statistics with Brandy: There was a zero percent chance the hernia would correct itself, a 60 percent chance it was on both sides of Amanda's abdomen, and a 100 percent chance it would get worse over time and create medical issues for the little girl. Surgical repair was the only option.

"My heart nearly stopped!" Brandy remembered. "It's so scary to think of your child needing surgery." Putting her fear aside, she scheduled Amanda for a November operation.

After arriving for a 6 a.m. admission, the nervous mom was relieved that no one used the word "surgery" with Amanda, who is shy and was scared. Brandy said, "Everyone — from the receptionist who checked us in to all the nurses — was wonderful and calm. All my questions and concerns were anticipated and answered."

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Brandy and Amanda were then met by Ronald Scorpio, MD, who would perform the surgery. He explained that the right inguinal hernia would be repaired and that Amanda's left side would be explored to see if surgical repair was necessary there as well.

Before she was wheeled off to the operating room, "a nurse came over to Amanda and showed her Princess Elsa videos on his phone and joked with her," Brandy recalled. "That really shows how much everyone thought about my daughter and wanted her to feel OK with what was happening."

As it turned out, Amanda's left side did need surgical repair. However, things went so well that she was able to go home that very night and was back in school three days later. "Everything went so much better than what I imagined!" said Brandy. "As scary as the whole situation was, every single person we dealt with was absolutely amazing."

Amanda is all healed up now. And while Brandy is glad this experience is behind them, she is happy Geisinger was here to care for Amanda. "We were very blessed to have such an awesome team taking care of us. I am most thankful for everybody being so great and good with my daughter!"