

# A RACE against TIME

Brodie was born prematurely

When Hayley's son Brodie stopped breathing, she had to act fast...



My boy



Me and Brodie



I've started campaigning

As I lay in bed, I tossed and turned. Pregnant, I was stressed and anxious, and unable to nod off. When I eventually did get to sleep, I woke in the early hours in a pool of blood. 'Stacy!' I called out to my husband in panic. He was sleeping next door with our eldest son, who was unwell. 'Something's wrong,' I urged as he rushed in. He saw the blood in the bed and rang 999. An ambulance arrived and I was blue-lighted to hospital. 'It's too soon,' I said weakly to the medical staff. I was just 32 weeks gone. Only, my baby was about to make his entrance, whether I wanted him to or not! Doctors said his heart rate was low and that he needed to be delivered now. And just a few hours later, Brodie came into the world, weighing 3lb 6oz. The surgeon briefly held my son to my face so I could see him before he was whisked

off to the neonatal intensive care unit. 'Is he going to be OK?' I asked the midwife in desperation. 'We need to keep him on a CPAP machine as he's struggling to breathe, and he has severe jaundice,' she explained. I was devastated. All I could do was pray my little man would pull through. For the first week, we couldn't hold Brodie as he was kept in an incubator in the NICU. He was fed through a tube and covered in wires. But Stacy and I sat beside him, talking to him, willing him to get stronger. When he was finally moved to a cot, we were so relieved. And holding him for the first time was just magical. 'Our little fighter,' I smiled as I looked down at him sleeping. At six weeks, we could finally take Brodie home. But as he was so fragile, we were advised to keep him away from anyone with a bug or a cold

**'My baby isn't breathing. Call 999 now!'**

as it could be dangerous. So, for the first few weeks, I stayed at home with Brodie in our little cocoon. As he grew bigger, we ventured out more. First, I took him to meet some of my friends, and then to work to show him off. 'He's so precious,' my colleagues cooed. As time went on, I became more confident about going out with him. Brodie was thriving, too. So one day, I took my eight-week-old to do the food shop. Afterwards, with time to spare before his feed, I popped to the vet's to pick up our dog Que's

prescription. Pulling into a parking space right in front of the surgery, I left Brodie in his car seat with the engine running and the air conditioning on so I could shout to the staff through the front door. I'd been going to the practice for years and they knew I was coming to collect something. 'We'll bring the medication out to you in a few minutes, Hayley,' one of the assistants smiled. I turned back round to the car to check on Brodie. I'd had my back to him for a matter of seconds but, to my surprise, he was crying. Only, it was a noise I'd never heard before. It sounded like a screech, so I took him out of his car seat and started to comfort him. 'Brodie, it's OK,' I reassured, holding him. But it wasn't working. His cry grew more pained. Thinking he might be

overheated, I took him into the shade. Suddenly, he stopped screaming. Brodie went silent. I looked at him and his neck had flopped back. His skin had turned grey and his lips were blue. Panicking, I ran back towards the vet's and kicked the door open with Brodie in my arms. 'My baby isn't breathing,' I cried. 'Call 999 now!' Putting Brodie on one of the seats in the waiting area, I began compressions. But as I started to press down on his chest, the chair kept bouncing. It wasn't working. Then I remembered a video I'd watched while Brodie was in the NICU. I'd spent time researching what you should do if a baby choked or stopped breathing, and recalled you needed to put the baby on a flat surface when

performing CPR. An employee rushed me through to one of the veterinary treatment rooms, and I placed Brodie on the table. The vet tried to help and started squeezing Brodie's sides. It was as if he was trying to resuscitate an animal. 'No, you're doing it wrong!' I said, before I took over and carried on doing rescue breaths and compressions. Meanwhile, the vet grabbed a stethoscope and began to listen to Brodie's heart. 'Stop, stop!' he called. 'We've got a heartbeat!' Brodie had also begun to breathe faint, shallow breaths. The vet ushered us into another room and carefully placed a small dog's oxygen mask over my baby's mouth. But suddenly noticing Brodie had blood in his mouth, I panicked again. 'What if I've broken his ribs

and punctured his lungs?' I cried. 'What if I've killed him?' Thankfully, two ambulances and a helicopter arrived swiftly and paramedics swarmed in. At the same time, Stacy appeared. Brodie and I were taken to hospital by ambulance while Stacy followed in his car. When we arrived, doctors were waiting for us in an emergency room, and immediately set to work. 'He's not going to make it, is he?' I said to one.

**'He's not going to make it, is he?'**

'We can't tell you that right now,' he replied solemnly. I burst into tears, fearing the worst. Just hours ago, he'd been my happy, giggling little boy. Now his life was in the balance. What on earth had happened? Once he was finally stabilised, Brodie was placed in an incubator in the intensive care unit. There, he was tested for meningitis but thankfully, the results came back negative. Eventually, we got news. Brodie had a collapsed lung, which hadn't been picked up at birth, and a viral infection. This, and the fact he was born prematurely, all contributed to his body shutting down. Doctors had managed to re-inflate his lung with oxygen and he was put on a CPAP machine – again for oxygen – and given a feeding tube, IV fluids and antibiotics. 'If you didn't do what you did, Brodie wouldn't be here,' a doctor said. 'You saved his life.' Eight days later, Brodie was strong enough to be discharged. 'Welcome home again,' I said to my precious bundle as we

he's reaching his milestones in good time! After Brodie's near-death experience, it struck me how vital it was to know how to perform CPR on a baby. So, I started campaigning to raise awareness. I spent many evenings reaching out to various organisations, daycare centres and schools, trying to get across the importance of infant CPR. Now, I've created a Facebook group to highlight the issue. I've also made a QR code that links to a video I made with the British Red Cross. It tells our story and also shows people how to properly perform CPR on a baby – which is different to doing it on an adult. My goal is to have the QR code on every parenting book. I also want it to be mandatory for new mums and dads to have CPR training. Every parent needs to know what to do. It haunts me thinking what could have happened if I hadn't been aware, Hayley Gardy, 40, of Melksham, Wiltshire



By Danielle Lett. To find out more, search 'Brodie's CPR campaign' on Facebook