

Miracle

# What if you had to choose . . .

Between saving your child's life and saving your own? When Becky Murphy was faced with that terrible decision, she did the only thing a mom could do . . .

**B**rightly colored mobiles danced above hand-painted cribs in the store window. Four months pregnant, Becky Murphy was drawn to the display. But . . .

Don't look, she told herself. You'll only cause yourself more pain.

This should have been an exciting time for the Olympia, Washington, mom-to-be. But Becky had just been diagnosed with cervical cancer.

Now she had a heart-wrenching decision to make: have a life-saving hysterectomy or put off saving her own life so she could save her baby . . .

This is the way it was meant to be, Becky had breathed when she first learned she was pregnant. Just a few months earlier, she'd married the man of her dreams, fellow Air Force Reservist Chris Murphy. A baby makes it all perfect, Becky mused.

Then, in her third month, she started bleeding. Becky rushed to the doctor. But an ultrasound showed the baby was fine.

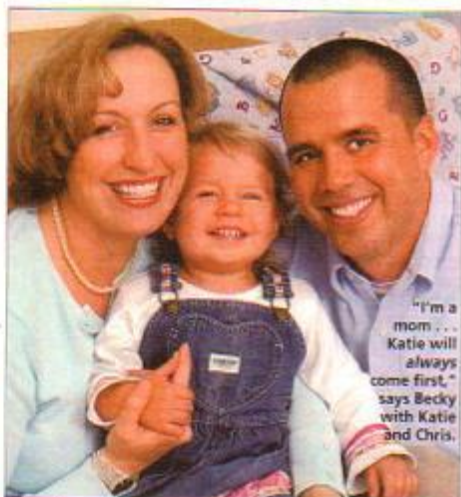
"Look," the doctor smiled, pointing at the screen.

Becky stared in awe. But after examining her, "There is something . . . probably a polyp," the doctor told Becky, explaining that growths were common in pregnancy and harmless. But to be safe, she did a Pap smear.

Two days later, the phone rang.

"I have your results and need you to come in first thing in the morning," the doctor said.

"Please, tell me now," Becky begged. For a moment, there was



"I'm a mom . . . Katie will always come first," says Becky with Katie and Chris.

only silence. Then . . . "I'm sorry, but you have cancer," the doctor said.

## I have cancer—and I'm pregnant!

At first, Becky was too shocked to react. But slowly the words sunk in.

Oh, God, I have cancer, and I'm pregnant! Becky gasped. What's going to happen to me? To my baby?

A few days later, Becky met with Seattle oncologist Dr. Charles Drescher. His face was grim.

"The type of cancer you have is very aggressive," Dr. Drescher told them. "The only way to stop it is for you to have a hysterectomy right away."

Becky's arms flew to her stomach.

"I know how heartbreaking a decision it is, but if you don't . . . I'm not sure you'll live to deliv-

## “We’re having this baby. Whatever happens is in God’s hands.”

er your baby," he said.

Becky started to cry. Hugging her, "I want our baby as much as you do," Chris choked. "But I can't lose you."

Dr. Drescher offered to freeze her eggs so that one day she could have a surrogate carry a baby for her. "I'll do it," Becky's best friend promised.

Becky was grateful, but . . . I'm already pregnant! her heart screamed. I saw my baby . . . and at her next doctor's visit, Becky learned they were having a girl!

She'd long ago promised her grandmother that if she ever had a daughter she'd name her after her.

Gazing at the screen . . . "Hello, Katie," Becky greeted softly.

And in that moment, she made up her mind.

"We're having this baby," Becky told Chris. "Whatever happens is in God's hands."

With the decision made, Becky and Chris began preparing for Katie's arrival. They painted the nursery, hung decorations—and prayed a lot, too.

"Once Katie's lungs are developed, we'll do a C-section," Dr. Drescher said.

And at 34 weeks, Becky was wheeled into surgery.

On May 1, 2003, it was Chris who heard five-pound, five-ounce Katie's first cries. "Welcome," he tearfully greeted her. Then he was ushered from the operating room so doctors could perform a hysterectomy.

The surgery went well and when they brought Becky to meet her daughter . . . Katie grabbed hold of her mom's pinky.

"Mommy's here," Becky whispered. Please, let me be here to see her grow up, she prayed.

The next few days were nerve-wracking, waiting to hear if the cancer had spread and . . .

"Katie's lungs collapsed!" Chris blurted one day.

"She made it this far," Becky cried. "We can't lose her!" And a few days later, with a determination

just like her mother's . . .

"Katie pulled out her ventilator. She's breathing on her own," the doctor announced.

And soon after, they got more good news . . .

## "You're cancer-free!"

"It's amazing with cancer this aggressive, but tests show it didn't spread beyond the cervix," Dr. Drescher said. "You're cancer-free!"

Sixteen days later, they joyfully brought their baby girl home.

Today, sitting with Chris, watching 19-month-old Katie running through the park . . . "I'll never ask God for another thing," says Becky. "He gave me a miracle. There is nothing more I could ever want."

—Shari Cohen

## Lower your risk of cervical cancer



Boost your cancer-fighting powers by following these simple but powerful tips:

### Take the "big three" vitamins.

Folic acid (which also helps prevent birth defects), vitamin C and vitamin E have been linked with lower rates of cervical cancer.

### Order that side salad.

Studies show that women with diets high in fruits and veggies are less likely to develop cervical cancer.

### Don't light up.

Quitting that expensive smoking habit will significantly lower your chances of getting cancer. Bonus: It will also lower your chances of getting wrinkles!

### Consider a "break" from the Pill.

Some research shows that using it five years or longer may increase the risk of cervical cancer.

### Be like a love bird: monogamous.

Human papilloma virus (HPV) is associated with cervical cancer, and monogamous people are at much lower risk.

### Get a Pap smear.

Starting at age 21, get tested once a year. To make it more accurate, try not to schedule the test during your period, and for 48 hours before the test, don't douche, use tampons, have intercourse or use birth control foams, jellies or other vaginal creams or medications.