

Meet Meara

Anyone watching Meara competing in basketball, softball or golf would likely be surprised to learn that she has chronic kidney disease. A fierce competitor, she was diagnosed as a newborn and had her first surgery at nine months old.

Meara's medical journey began at 3 months when she started having 104- to 105-degree fevers. At her community hospital, tests determined that her kidneys looked enlarged and could be the source of her temperatures. After they treated her infection with antibiotics and other medications, the local team referred her to a children's hospital in Philadelphia, where she was diagnosed with chronic kidney disease and a horseshoe kidney (this happens when the kidneys are fused together like a horseshoe), followed by a seven-hour surgery to remove a ureteropelvic junction obstruction.

"To this day, we are beyond appreciative of her wonderful surgeon in Philadelphia," says her mom, Clare.

Clare remembers many appointments and unplanned hospital visits to manage Meara's condition and gratitude when things stabilized. But she also recalls frustration with her daughter's care team.

"It was hard to get any questions that I had answered in between appointments. And when we were with her doctor, I felt they were rushed and distracted," Clare says.

When Meara was 3 years old, Clare was attending a National Kidney Foundation event where she met "Dr. JJ" (Joshua J. Zaritsky, MD, PhD). Clare expressed her concerns about Meara's care, and Dr. JJ invited her to visit Nemours. The next day, his assistant called to get them on Dr. JJ's schedule.

"That chance meeting took place in 2016, and the rest is history," Clare says. "Her Nemours care team always interacts with Meara with the utmost attention and support. They consistently take the time to answer all my questions and concerns, and they are thrilled to see Meara doing well!"

At 11 years old, Meara and her travel basketball team competed in the state championship tournament in the spring, where she made the winning three-point shot in the final three seconds of their last game. By staying well-hydrated and following a kidney-healthy diet, Meara continues to feel great and enjoys her sports, as well as drawing and performing in her school's musicals. This year, she was cast as the Captain of the Guard in their production of Shrek the Musical, Jr.

"We are so grateful for her Nemours care team. Having known what good care looks like, we're thrilled to be in the hands of those who deliver great care regularly," says Clare.

