

## BabyGym and open heart surgery

Gona Reddy

Tiarra turned three on 13 December. This birthday was more of a celebration than the previous two. She had major heart surgery as a baby. Until five months, this adorable little girl would only walk if forced to. She would hold onto the wall and walk sideways, one step at a time, with a fear-stricken face. Tiarra did not speak fluently. She was very reluctant to repeat words or even identify items. She was happy when someone sang as she would sing along a word or two at intervals. I started [doing BabyGym massage with](#) Tiarra from October 2007 (only whenever she was available at the caregiver's home). I always repeated the massage on her arms and legs; incorporated co-ordination exercises with her limbs and combined this with rhyme and song. Her caregiver stimulates her throughout the day by talking and singing to and with her. She also encourages her walking. Since Tiarra hardly eats, I [also repeated the BabyGym activities](#) to stimulate suckling and speech. We received the most wonderful Christmas gift. A week before Christmas, Tiarra started walking. She tended to hold her arms up at shoulder level, with her fingers curled, as a means of balance and security. As of two weeks ago, Tiarra now also answers when questioned and freely identifies objects. She also walks with her arms at her sides. Her walking and speech still needs a lot more love and massage. [I've learned NEVER to give up!](#)

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