MAYO CLINIC

Steven's Story: Bridge to Transplant

Video	Audio
Steven Graham	"I had never been able to chase her or pick her up and carry her any sort of extended distance. Now that she was bigger, it was very much like, 'OK, like I want to be a dad.'"
	That dedication to daughter, Ari, and wife, Randi, motivated Steven Graham to conquer a rare heart defect. Born with his heart in backward, Steven survived surgery as a baby to correct a transposition of his great arteries. But by age 30, his heart was failing, and he needed a transplant.
Steven Graham **Heart Patient**	"Really kind of simple things like that, just going up and down the block would be a challenge. Yeah, It was scary. It was scary."
	Steven came to Mayo Clinic when his doctors said they could no longer help him. His declining heart damaged his lungs. He was facing the prospect of a complex heart and lung transplant.
Sudhir Kushwaha, M.D. **Cardiovascular Disease** **Mayo Clinic**	"If he didn't get the heart transplant, I think his prognosis would have been in months, basically. He did have pulmonary hypertension, but we thought that we might be able to reverse that and get him to a point where he would be fine with a heart transplant alone."

	The Transplant Team proceeded with a regenerative intervention together with medication as a bridge to transplant. They inserted a mechanical a balloon pump to boost Steven's heart circulation and restore lung function.
Atta Behfar, M.D., Ph.D. **Cardiovascular Disease** **Mayo Clinic**	"Then the balloon pump is essentially a second pump in the body. So it complements the heart's function and driving forward flow, and really reduces the burden on a failing heart to work."
	The standard way of implanting the balloon pump is through the leg. But that's grueling on patients who must remain bedbound their entire time with the pump. What really made the difference for Steven is Mayo Clinic discovered a way of making it easier on patients by placing the pump through an artery in the arm, giving access to the descending aorta. That gave Steven the flexibility to get up and move around with the balloon pump working inside. And he could tolerate it for a longer period of time.
Dr. Atta Behfar	"You know, weeks and weeks, rather than days. We could suddenly think about maybe truly reversing the lung pressures, regenerating the lung to a point where now he would again be able to qualify for heart transplant."
	Time is what Steven needed to reverse years of lung damage. But it came as a mixed blessing for his family.
Randi Graham **Steven's wife**	"I get the call that he's not going to be able to come home until a heart becomes available. And so then, it became, 'Oh, man, when am I gonna see you again?' So, yeah, it was so much grief."
	Steven resolved that it would be a short time until his family had him back. He turned his focus from waiting for a heart to getting in shape for a transplant.

Steven Graham	"But that's when I was like, 'Can I have a stationary bike?' So I rode the stationary bike 10 miles a day. Cause, you know, if you're bedridden, you're just like, your muscles aren't doing anything, and they are going to atrophy and fall away."
	After two months, Steven's grit and determination paid off with the gift of a new heart. The exercise, medication and balloon pump all contributed to a strong recovery. He was discharged from the hospital just two weeks after his heart transplant — in time for a double celebration: his daughter's birthday and the start of a new life.
Steven Graham	"I mean everything is a lot easier physically. I can do pretty much anything I want to do. I can pick her up and swing around and chase her — things I literally could not do before."
	The Grahams never lost hope this day would come. They credit faith, confidence in the medical team and support of friends, family and the hospital chaplain.
Steven Graham	"And as far as goals for the future, I just want to protect and nurture what I've been given and make sure that I am a worthy example."
	For the Mayo Clinic News Network, I'm Susan Buckles.