

Jessie's Journey

Stomach pain. We've probably all had it at some point in our lives. But for the woman you're about to meet, her stomach pain set in motion a journey that led her to Mayo Clinic and the experts who could perform a lifesaving surgery.

Reporter Marty Velasco Haines explains.

Nats of Jessie teaching her PE class)	
Narrator:	Jessie Boyd has dedicated her life to health and fitness. She's been teaching kids about the benefits of exercise as a PE teacher for nearly two decades. When it comes to her own fitness, you could find Jessie out hiking, biking — anything to stay active. For Jessie, maintaining a healthy lifestyle means the sky's the limit. But one morning in 2021, Jessie's active lifestyle came to an abrupt halt due to sudden, excruciating stomach pain.
JESSIE BOYD LIVER TRANSPLANT PATIENT	"My mom and Justin took me to the hospital right near our house, they admit me. They do a whole bunch of tests, and they determined that I had a hole in my intestine."
Narrator:	Jessie was a taken into surgery immediately to repair the hole, and that's when surgeons discovered there was an even bigger problem. Additional testing revealed that Jessie was born with Budd-Chiari syndrome, a rare condition that causes impaired blood flow in the liver. Jessie and her family were told a liver transplant was not an option and she was days from death.
Jessie Boyd	"But they said, 'We do not have the expertise to give Jessie the liver transplant.' And my mom and Justin (said), 'Like, what are you talking about?'

	So, Mom and Justin said, 'Please get her to Mayo.'"
BASHAR AQEL, M.D. TRANSPLANT HEPATOLOGY Mayo Clinic	"Somebody with acute liver failure similar to the status she presented with, if they don't get the lifesaving liver transplant within seven days, they were unlikely to make it."
Narrator:	Jessie got to Mayo Clinic in Phoenix, Arizona, but a donor organ still had to be located. Then on Christmas Day, a donor organ was found, thanks to the generosity of a person who made the decision to give the gift of life.
Jessie Boyd	"So my whole family was cheering and jumping and everything, and Justin said, 'Thank you, God.'"
BASHAR AQEL, M.D.	"When we hear those words, I just say we get goosebumps because we love what we do. And that's the reason we continue doing what we are doing. Because with every donor, we save up to eight lives."
Jessie Boyd	"I'm two years and four months out from my transplant, and I'm better than I've ever been. And I just hope that I can give hope to another person who goes through something like this. And fight, because it's worth it."
Narrator:	For the Mayo Clinic News Network. I'm Marty Velasco Haines.