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February 13, 2007

Baby to receive treatment in Minn.

■ **Family expects trip to cost at least \$10,000; fund set up for donations**

By **Davin White**
 Staff writer

For just a moment, Natalie Scott boiled her son's complex medical condition down to a simpler thought.

Dylan Allison's three older brothers are big fans of chips, cookies and other tasty snacks. Dylan's mother knows her son's life would be easier if she doesn't have to take away the chips, saying, "No, you can't, here's some Jell-O."

"Dylan certainly loves his food. He knows when it's milk time. He lets the nurses know," she said of her month-old son. "Dr. Foker can offer him the chance to have a normal life."

Dr. John Foker, a surgeon at the University of Minnesota's Children's Hospital, has pioneered a procedure that tiny Dylan is expected to undergo later this month to treat his esophageal atresia. About one in 3,000 babies has the condition, where the esophagus does not connect to the stomach.

Dylan's home thus far has been the neonatal intensive care unit at CAMC Women and Children's Hospital. He was born Jan. 3, about eight weeks early. His mother suffered through excessive amniotic fluid late in her pregnancy, a common side effect of EA.

A feeding tube direct to Dylan's stomach provides nourishment, while a constant suction retrieves saliva. He is able to breathe on his own, but will be given help for about two weeks during surgery, said his father, Craig Allison.

During the lengthy surgical procedure, Foker will attempt to suture two ends where the esophagus did not connect properly, gradually stretch each end through traction and sew up the connection. Dylan's parents say the surgery might last a week or longer.

For most children affected by the condition, the two ends of the esophagus are close together and joining them is straightforward, according to the hospital. For others, the problem is more difficult, and the ends so far apart they can't easily be connected.

Dylan's case falls with the latter. The esophageal connection to his stomach has not yet been found after three barium tests, his father said.

Even with this severe condition, all 50-odd patients that have undergone Foker's traction suture method in the past 10 years are on track to eat and swallow like normal children, according to the children's hospital. Within six months or less, many patients have their feeding tubes removed, according to the hospital.

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► **Photos**



Craig Allison and Natalie Scott are waiting to take the youngest member of their family, Dylan Allison, to Minnesota to correct his esophageal atresia. Craig and Natalie are shown with (from left) Craig's twins, Gaven and Tristen, and Natalie's son Connor.



Tiny Dylan Allison waits in CAMC Women and Children's Hospital's neonatal intensive care unit for a trip to Minnesota for surgery. He was born in early January.

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