



NEWS RELEASE

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Formerly Conjoined Twins Find Separate Strides

(COLUMBUS, Ohio) – Two-year-old twins Acen and Apio Akello, born conjoined, are now walking and playing independently thanks to specialists at Nationwide Children's Hospital. Healthy and happy, the girls recently returned to their home country of Uganda.

The girls were born joined at the spine and hip region, but had a successful separation surgery on Thursday, Sept. 3, 2015 at Nationwide Children's. A surgical team of more than 30 specialists from pediatric surgery, plastic surgery, colorectal surgery, neurosurgery, anesthesiology and nursing performed the 16-hour operation.

Following their operation and recovery, the twins were discharged from the hospital on Feb. 8, 2016. They stayed at the Columbus Ronald McDonald House while going to outpatient appointments and clinical therapy appointments where they learned how to walk. It was not a simple task since they were conjoined and not able to walk for the first year of their lives.

“My main goal for when they arrived home in Uganda was for them to be able to walk off the plane independently, without any assistance,” said Dr. Gail Besner, chief of Pediatric Surgery at Nationwide Children's. “The determination of the girls and the outstanding work of our occupational therapy and physical therapy teams helped them do just that.”

Conjoined twins occur in about 1 in 200,000 pregnancies. Since 1978, surgeons at Nationwide Children's have successfully separated five sets of conjoined twins, including Acen and Apio.

“I fully expect the girls will lead happy and healthy lives thanks to their determination and the bravery of their mom, Ester, who entrusted the girls in our care,” said Dr. Besner, also a faculty member at The Ohio State University College of Medicine.

[Click here for video and photos from twins' hospital surgery, recovery and final days in Columbus, Ohio.](#)