

# MyStory

Stories from the California SIDS Program



*It can happen to any baby in any family. Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), the sudden unexplained death of a baby younger than one year of age, is something no parent should experience. The loss of a baby takes a devastating toll on the parents, families and communities impacted by this type of tragedy.*

## Jenn & James

Jennifer and James welcomed baby Aeron into their family in March of 2017. He was the happy baby who Jenn and James lovingly dubbed their silent ninja. The name stuck because Aeron had a habit of crawling right over to the dog bowl and knocking it over the minute his parents weren't watching. Aeron was always laughing.

***“He was a little angel on Earth,”***

*says mom Jenn*

The day Aeron passed away was memorable for many reasons. It was James' birthday and the family had gone to brunch with a group of old friends. As soon as they arrived home, Jenn nursed Aeron to sleep and placed him in the pack n' play for his nap. Aeron awoke and fussed, but being fussy during nap time was typical for him, so she shut the door and told her husband, James, before leaving for her shift at the hospital. James fell asleep and woke sometime later with a start; Aeron was suspiciously quiet for how much time had passed. James leaped up with a strange feeling to check on Aeron. At first, all he saw was a red blanket. Aeron must have become entangled in the blanket, his body was stiff, James realized immediately. “I screamed, I brought

him out to the living room, and I started to do CPR,” says James, but it was too late.

Jenn returned home amidst the chaos. She and James jumped into a firetruck, which followed Aeron in the ambulance to the hospital. Says James,

“I just remember holding Jenn's hand and I said no matter what happens, we're gonna get through this together.”

When a baby dies suddenly and unexpectedly, it may be investigated. As James went home and recreated the scene for investigators, Jenn spent time in the hospital saying goodbye to her son.

Jenn recalls that experience:

“James just gave me really good advice – told me not to rush the moment and just hold him (Aeron) because it was going to be the last time we held him. I'm so thankful. I don't know how many hours I was there holding and hugging and kissing him, but I do remember that night very well and the intimacy of it and the sorrow and the beauty of the last moments before we had to really say goodbye.”



To learn more, visit: [cdph.ca.gov/SIDS](http://cdph.ca.gov/SIDS)



Maternal, Child & Adolescent Health  
**mcah**

## Aeron's Memory Lives On

Jenn and James keep Aeron's memory alive every day.

"I take Aeron to work with me on a daily basis. Literally, because he's on my home screen," James laughs warmly. Both he and his wife are pediatricians. Working at a teaching hospital, James sees his role as an educator to both medical students and parents who may know about SIDS but may not know the importance of creating a safe sleep environment. By sharing his experience and a photo of Aeron, the parents that come into his office are putting a face to SIDS. Says James, "As a parent, telling another parent – you know we're on the same team here, we're both parents – to let them know that's something I've experienced that I definitely don't want them to experience."

Shortly after Aeron died, James had already started to mention that he wanted to build something in Aeron's memory and something that would bring together everyone who loves Aeron. Soon **Aeron's Foundation** was born, a not-for-profit organization with a vision to build a future free from the suffering caused by SIDS. The foundation provides education and awareness about sudden unexpected infant death. What sets the foundation apart is that it also provides financial assistance for families. As Jenn says, they

wanted to "build a fund for families who have undergone such devastation to help support them financially with the burial process, funerals and things

that just feel like salt on top of the wound." The foundation is a labor of love for Jenn, James, their siblings and their close-knit friends. Just as the couple carves out time to take their daughter, Aeris, to gymnastics, Jenn and James dedicate time to Aeron and the foundation named in his honor.

Aeron will always be a part of the family. James says, "I'll make sure Aeris will never forget who her younger brother was. I'm just all about making sure his time here is not forgotten."

## A Message of Hope and Resilience

Jenn offers hope to other parents who have experienced the sudden unexpected loss of a baby: "For parents who have gone through losing a child to SIDS, I want to tell them there is light at the end of the tunnel and there will be happiness again." Jenn shares that the grief is really heavy, hard and exhausting - but the light will shine again.



*James (holding photo of Aeron), Jenn, Aevin and Aeris*

## Creating a safe sleep environment

**As a pediatrician, James empowers parents to create a safe sleep environment for their babies.**

- ▶ Place the baby on their back
- ▶ Place the baby on a firm sleep surface
- ▶ Make sure the baby is alone in the crib/bassinet (no blankets, stuffed animals or toys)
- ▶ Make sure the baby isn't too hot or overheated
- ▶ Use a pacifier after the first month
- ▶ Breastfeed
- ▶ Have a smoke free environment



To learn more, visit: [AeronsFoundation.org](http://AeronsFoundation.org)



Maternal, Child & Adolescent Health  
**mcah**