



Big heart of a tiny fighter

Kelly Ryan

A MELBOURNE miracle has been billed Australia's tiniest tot.

Little Elora was the length of a pen and weighed less than a juicy orange when she was born, almost five months prematurely, at the Royal Women's Hospital.

Today, the tot is thriving on Mum's milk, fed through a nasal tube.

From a 319g red, scrawny scrap of near-life she has thrived to develop into a chunkier cherub.

Now, at 8½ months, she is 4.7kg — still half the average weight of four-week-olds who join her at weekly mothers' group meetings.

Elora is believed to be the smallest baby ever born to survive her desperate start in life.

Mum Adele De Bondi, a nurse, had known the likely outcome when



Tough start: Elora soon after her birth.

major problems were diagnosed just over four months into her first pregnancy.

"She was too small, too premature, to be viable, and I expected the worst," Ms De Bondi said.

"But at the same time, my gut instinct was that this child would be a fighter and if she was allowed to be born, she would take it from there."

Delivery was by caesarean section and she did not see her daughter until the next day when she was pushed in a wheelchair to gaze at the tiny tot struggling for life in a humidicrib.

"Her head was the same size as my thumbnail, but I bonded with her the split-second I saw her fighting for life," she said.

"I was amazed and

ecstatic and overawed she had survived the night, and I knew instantly and instinctively that she would survive.

"She was too critically ill for them to measure her, but my mother photographed her alongside a pen and they were roughly the same length."

Elora has spent months in the Royal Women's Hospital, overcoming multiple problems including collapsed lungs and multiple bleeds.

Today, at home in Balwyn, the battler bub is showing her true colours.

"She sleeps soundly by night and is alert and inquisitive by day. She eats to make up for what she has missed out on and is going ahead in leaps and bounds," Adele said.

She spoke of Elora's battle in the hope of attracting donations to the hospital's neonatal and intensive care unit.

The RWH Foundation can be contacted on 9344 2006.



Winning the fight: Elora with her mum, Adele De Bondi, is now making progress in leaps and bounds. Picture: JAY TOWN