



Michael Favor, 38, and Rosa Favor, 37, with daughters Gia, 15 months, and Sofia, 6, at their home in Wall.

# Beating the Odds

**Jersey Shore University Medical Center** *A Wall woman fights for her family.*

Today, Rosa and Michael Favor have two daughters, Sofia, 6, and Gia, 15 months. But their journey to grow their family hasn't been easy. In 2011, Rosa gave birth to a baby boy who passed away three days later. Doctors discovered he had a rare genetic condition, and tests showed that Rosa and Michael unknowingly carried the genetic mutation, too.

In 2012, they decided to go through in vitro fertilization (IVF) so that embryos could be screened to make sure they didn't have the mutation. Unfortunately, Rosa didn't become pregnant through IVF. She visited **Alexander Shifrin, M.D.**, surgical director of the Center for Thyroid, Parathyroid, and Adrenal Diseases at Jersey Shore University Medical Center and part of **Meridian Cancer Care**, to find out whether a thyroid issue might explain why she didn't get pregnant with IVF.

## Searching for Answers

Dr. Shifrin performed an ultrasound of Rosa's thyroid and found a thyroid nodule. He biopsied it and discovered something Rosa and Michael never expected: Rosa had thyroid cancer. "We were planning to do another IVF cycle, so we had to decide right away whether or not to continue," she says. Dr. Shifrin was sensitive to their unique situation and presented Rosa's case to the tumor board, a multi-disciplinary team of providers who discuss patients' cases to develop the best treatment plan. "We determined that thyroid surgery had to be done first," Dr. Shifrin says. "Rosa had extensive disease that metastasized to her lymph nodes, and the most important thing was to treat her cancer before proceeding with fertility treatments."

In April 2013, Dr. Shifrin performed a minimally invasive procedure to remove Rosa's

thyroid. He also removed 31 lymph nodes and closed the incision with surgical glue. Rosa went home that same day. A few months later, she underwent radioactive iodine therapy to kill any microscopic cancer cells that may have been left behind. Screening tests afterward showed that the treatment was successful and she had no signs of cancer.

## New Beginnings

That wasn't the only happy news they received. In September 2014, Rosa and Michael found out they had conceived naturally. When Rosa was 16 weeks along, genetic testing confirmed that their baby didn't carry the genetic mutation. Their healthy baby girl, Gia, was born in May 2015.

Since her surgery, Rosa takes thyroid hormone replacement medication and follows up with **Cristina Ciorlian, M.D., FACE**, an endocrinologist at Jersey Shore, to make sure her hormone levels stay within a healthy range. "After having a complex treatment for thyroid cancer, we monitored and adjusted Rosa's thyroid hormone during her pregnancy," says Dr. Ciorlian. "It has been a wonderful joy to see Gia grow up healthy." Rosa also visits Dr. Shifrin every few months for an ultrasound to make sure her cancer stays away.

"Dr. Shifrin has been amazing from the minute we stepped into his office," Rosa says. "He was very sensitive to our situation. He knew how badly I wanted another child. He's always given great advice, and we've trusted him every step of the way."



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## Another Success Story



Rosa is just one of the many patients who has benefited from Dr. Shifrin's care. Find more inspirational stories at [MeridianHealth.com/SurvivorStories](http://MeridianHealth.com/SurvivorStories).