

weighing only 1 pound, 13 ounces.

Zion was moved to the hospital's neonatal intensive care unit, where she'll stay until July, when she was originally due.

Her mom was lucky to survive the ordeal. For days, it seemed like Chancay's health would never improve, her sister said.

At one point, doctors told the family that Chancay qualified for remdesivir, an anti-viral drug that's shown signs of healing COVID-19 patients.

"We didn't hesitate. There was no other choice," said Chancay's sister Patsy Mendoza. "We were praying that she would get better by Easter. We just prayed and prayed."

Chancay was awakened April 13 — the Monday after Easter. She remembers being a bit startled when she opened her eyes — but somehow, she felt like she knew what had happened.

"As weird as this sounds, part of me was kind of awake and part of me was not, so I always had the view of the (hospital) room," Chancay said. "I don't know how to explain it. It was kind of bizarre. I always knew I was there."

She learned she had become a mother — and that her daughter was virus-free.

"When I saw my baby [on the monitor], I cried," Chancay told the Daily News. "It feels like everything just happened so quickly but then I realized — 'Wow, I was there for a long time.'"

That day, she telephoned her sister, who was overjoyed to hear from her. "That was just the happiest day when I saw her name come up on my phone," Mendoza said.

Chancay, a flight attendant by day and an acrylic artist by night, is now recovering at Mendoza's home in Connecticut, undergoing physical therapy to get her strength back and healing an open wound from her C-section. She still has some lung damage, and can't talk or move too fast without coughing.

"I'm still going through the motions. The wounds are still really fresh," she said.

"But I'm extremely grateful that my baby and I are alive," she said, breaking down in tears.

The hardest part is not being able to see Zion in person. Doctors said Chancay — who will raise Zion on her own — most likely won't be able to hold her daughter until she's ready to be discharged from the hospital. For now she monitors her newborn on a webcam — a heartbreaking but necessary sacrifice to keep Zion safe.

"She moves her hand and arms a lot, and here and there I can catch her open and close her eyes," Chancay gushed. "I feel very blessed and grateful."



## UPDATE:

As of late June, Chancay and Zion were on the right track.

"I'm still trying to get back to my full strength but I'm getting stronger every day," Chancay said. "I'm not 100% yet but I'm getting there."

Zion now weighs six pounds. She is being weaned off the feeding tube and oxygen machine.

"She is doing well, thank God," Chancay, who is now allowed to visit her daughter in the hospital, said.

Chancay doesn't know how she contracted COVID-19. She became pregnant in October and rarely worked because she had trouble keeping food and water down. She became dehydrated. Her last flight was in February.

Then she got COVID-19.

"I had a difficult pregnancy and a difficult delivery," she said. "She made me work for her."

But it was definitely worth it, she said.