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NEWS

# Big bill for tiny baby

## Debts wrack up after early birth

By Myra Philp

A DUBAI resident has steered himself over the prospect of going to jail after his wife went in to labour early and hospital bills for the birth and treatment of his premature son plunged his family into debt.

Viktor Nechayev, 30, and wife Anastasia, 29, were looking forward to the birth of their second son in August - but he arrived 13 weeks early after her waters unexpectedly broke on June 15.

Terrified Anastasia called her gynaecologist, but got no answer. She then called her doctor at home in the Ukraine, where the baby was going to be born, who told her to go immediately to a hospital emergency department.

The distressed mum was taken to a public hospital by ambulance but doctors there were unable to help. Anastasia said: "I was asked whether I am registered with them and if I have insurance, when they realised that I have nothing they said to look for a hospital with intensive care for premature babies and incubators because they didn't have empty beds and couldn't help us."

Anastasia then went to another hospital that did accept her and was given drugs to help the unborn baby's lungs open.

Then, on June 17, the couple's boy was born by emergency c-section weighing just 1.15kg - a little more than the weight of a bag of sugar.



**NEW ARRIVAL:** Viktor and Anastasia with their little warrior, Yaroslav, who still needs medical care

Anastasia said: "Of course we said we would pay anything to save our baby at that time.

"He was supposed to be born in my home country. I even have the plane ticket."

Now family and friends are rallying to raise money for the hospital bill, which stands at more than Dhs200,000.

Anastasia said: "Viktor says he might have to go to jail. The bill is more likely to be Dhs300,000 by the time the baby gets out of hospital.

"The doctors keep saying not to worry, just to think about the baby. So far Dhs45,000 has been raised but we don't know where we'll get the rest."

The Nechayevs have named their boy Yaroslav

after an ancient warrior King who united Viktor's home country, Russia, and Anastasia's, the Ukraine.

Anastasia said: "He is a little warrior and we want him to keep fighting. At first I was frightened to pick him up. He was so small and surrounded by tubes."

Yaroslav now weighs 3.4lbs but the couple have no idea how much longer he will have to stay in hospital.

"He is still needing oxygen. Even now he shouldn't have been born," Anastasia said.

She added: "We want to thank everybody who has helped us so far. They have big hearts."