

## Doctors Remove Cantaloupe-Sized Tumor From 12-Year-Old Girl's Face

Sonia Rincon | March 9, 2017

**NEW HYDE PARK, N.Y. (CBSNewYork)** — A 12-year-old girl from Gambia is thanking the doctors who removed a six-pound tumor the size of a cantaloupe from her jaw.

The massive tumor had Janet Silva hiding behind a scarf.

As CBS2's Dr. Max Gomez reported, Silva started getting a swelling in her jaw about 3 or 4 years ago.

It grew to a melon sized tumor that made it hard for her to eat or even breathe.

"She was a prisoner in her own body," said Dr. David Hoffman. "A tumor to grow this size is just extremely unique, you just never see this kind of thing."



Janet Silva and her mother thank the doctors who removed a 6-pound tumor from her face (credit: Sonia Rincon/1010 WINS)

Using 3-D models to plan the surgery, Hoffman said they figured out how to remove the entire tumor and replace part of her jaw using a bone graft from her leg.

"When she came to see us the first day she really couldn't look you in the eye, she was just a prisoner in herself, she couldn't talk, more strikingly she could barely eat," Hoffman said. "I think if she had another six months she might've starved to death."

The procedure to remove the tumor was a high risk operation.

"The major carotid artery is there, all the nerves that go to the face is there," Dr. Hoffman said.

Surgeons had to remove virtually all of Janet's lower jaw. Then doctors had to rebuild it with bone from her lower leg.

"She's only, and doesn't have that much bone in her leg," Dr. Armen Kasabian said.

Now she's laughing and smiling, retraining all the facial muscles reconnected to her new jaw.

"Janet's back," Hoffman said. "Here's this little girl who wants to talk and smile."

Her mother, Philomena, also thanked the doctors through an interpreter.

"What impressed me the most is the team effort," she said.

Janet is on her way to a full recovery and will be headed back home soon to Gambia.

"I'm so happy the doctors helped me," Janet said. "I would like to say to everybody, thank you."

The 10-hour surgery was done about two months ago at the Cohen's Children's Medical Center with help from the Staten Island-based charity the Global Medical Relief Fund.

Janet and her mother will be returning to Gambia later this year.

