

Allison

Allison was born full term after a long and difficult labor and eventual cesarean section. My husband held her at my bedside during my recovery and all seemed well. By the time we arrived at my room, a neonatologist was there to greet us with news that our baby had several episodes of apnea in the recovery nursery; she stopped breathing. An MRI revealed a right middle cerebral arterial clot and sub-arachnoid bleed. The developmental pediatrician told us just what to expect, basically her left hemiplegia, and after a week in NICU she came home with her very shook up parents.

Fast forward to age three. January 1, 2000 - the new millennium. While everyone was worrying about computers crashing, we were taking our first of many trips to the emergency room for status seizures. The first time, Allison was hospitalized and started on anticonvulsant medications. She had many more seizures over the next four years, averaging about one per month. Allison's problem wasn't so much the frequency of her seizures, but the duration, lasting 30-40 minutes. We tried many different drugs and combinations of drugs, giving her Diastat at home to try to avoid the ER as much as possible.

Our Neurologist had begun early on to discuss the possibility of surgery to help control Allison's seizures. In June of 2002 we took our first trip to the Cleveland Clinic to spend a week in the Long Term Epilepsy Monitoring Unit. It was determined that because the constant seizure activity was isolated to her original stroke area, she was a perfect candidate for a Functional Hemispherectomy. We spent 18 months and several more trials of medications before deciding that her best chance for a normal, independent life, would lie in stopping her seizures and that this was our only hope.



While Allison was in first grade, we traveled back to the Cleveland Clinic monitoring unit to make sure everything looked the same before her surgery. She was so great and cooperative for everything. When the surgery morning arrived, Allison could be seen "driving" her gurney to the OR prep room.

We waited for over six hours to hear that all had gone well. We were able to see Allison soon after in the Intensive Care Unit, but it would be the next day before she woke and spoke with us.



We had expected to stay in Cleveland for a couple of weeks post-surgically. Two days after surgery Allison was doing so well that she was moved to a Step-down unit and monitored closely. Three days later she was discharged. I was scared to leave and spent another night in the adjacent hotel until my husband gently encouraged me it was okay to take her home.

Allison began to take off cognitively almost immediately. Reading, writing, and math, all seemed to come easier to her as teachers came daily during her recovery.

For our family, this was the both the most difficult and the best decision we have ever made. Allison has been seizure-free ever since. Now in the fifth grade and doing well, she has recently gone completely off of anticonvulsant medications.

Allison's mother



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