

Congenital Talipes Equinovarus Club Foot: Harry's Story

Information for parents from the Paediatric Orthopaedic Service

Part 1

When you are told that your child has got Talipes (club foot), the bottom of your world falls out. All sorts of emotions go through you. You even blame yourself, thinking it is your fault, even though the doctors and medical staff say it isn't. They explain to you what it is but it just doesn't sink in.

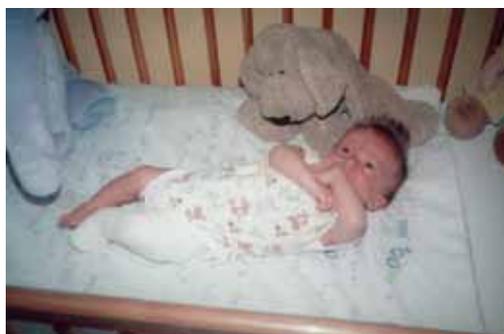
The words "Your child will need a hip scan, physiotherapy and plaster casts" are alien to you and go over your head.

I was told my son had Talipes when he was born. I was told and shown how to manipulate his foot everyday to help make his foot more supple, and I did this religiously up to four times a day.

At Harry's first hospital assessment we were told and shown everything that was going to happen to Harry over the next few weeks, and what the plaster casts would do. All I wanted to do was be sick, scream and run away, hoping that everything would just go away. I found myself for no reason welling up and sometimes feeling very angry with myself. I was reassured that these emotions were normal.

What did help a lot was that my in-laws found a website on the internet called "STEPS" which had all the information we needed. The hospital where the treatment took place also provided us with leaflets and other information that we needed.

Harry was five weeks old when he had his first plaster cast put on. The team involved were so kind and reassured us all the way through. They explained step by step what they were doing or going to do, what to expect and what not to expect.



I must admit Harry was not impressed with the situation and screamed all the way through the procedure, but I was assured it did not hurt him. It looked and sounded worse than it was.

The worse was yet to come though, my tiny baby boy with a plaster cast on his left leg from thigh to toe and sobbing. It was hard to watch. They advised us to pick him up and give him a cuddle, but how?! It took a while to get used to but I soon forgot about it and I was able to get on with day to day things as normal.



We were told we would need to go once a week to the hospital to have Harry's plaster cast changed and improved, also due to his constant growing and to check the plaster hasn't become too tight.

The first night was very unsettled as Harry hadn't got used to the feel of the plaster cast, but by the next day everything was back to the normal routine. We also received lots of sympathy from friends, relatives and even people we had never met. Harry was in his element!

When the next appointment came we more or less knew what to expect. When the cast was taken off and we couldn't believe what a difference a week had made. It gave us more than a glimmer of hope for the future.



All of Harry's casts from week one to week four

At this second appointment we were told that each cast would bring Harry's foot out more and more and warned that at one point it may look very odd as if his foot was turned out like "Charlie Chaplin", but that this was all part of the treatment and normal.



To help us deal with all this we keep telling ourselves "it will all be worth it in the end". I have also found it very useful to keep a diary of everything to do with the treatment and my feelings.

It's helped me to cope. I am hoping this can then be put away with the plaster casts and given to Harry when he is older. We have also taken photos and popped it inside the diary. We can then compare his starting position with his finished result.



Looking back at the first appointment it wasn't nearly as bad as I thought it was going to be and I thank, from the bottom of my heart, everyone who is and was involved with Harry's treatment. It is greatly appreciated. We are glad we had it done, however hard it is now and may be in the future.



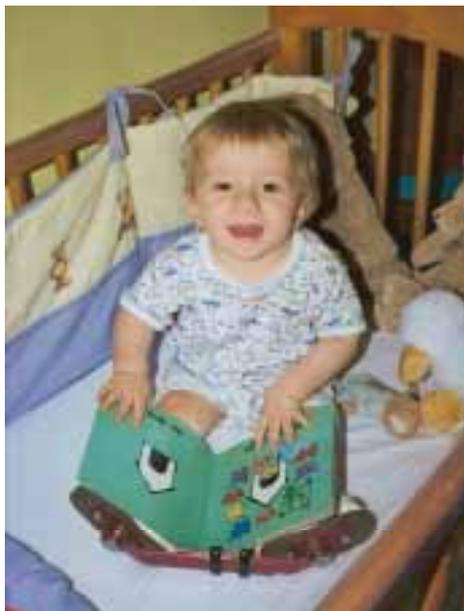
Part 2

It's almost a year since we wrote Harry's story. He is now 14 ½ months old and is into everything and moving everywhere. Harry is almost walking without help and it certainly won't be long. He is a happy chap and things don't seem to faze him. He just gets on with it all. He has got a huge personality and is very funny.



We can not believe that it is over a year since we had all the stress of the plaster casts, hospital appointments, boots, etc. Harry's foot is now perfect and what it should be. He only needs to see Mr Cornell once a year.

He still needs to wear his boots at night time, but this is nothing and is so much part of our daily routine that we don't even notice them. Harry also accepts them now as part of his routine. Gone are the days of screaming, frustration and kicking... and that was just the parents! He even tries to put them on and tie the laces. Nine times out of ten he unties them instead, but never mind. We however, are less stressed and almost have a normal life again.



Harry's boots haven't stopped him from getting around or slowed him down. He can stand, climb stairs and even tries to walk in them.

Once again we would like to say "thank you" to everyone who was and is still involved with Harry's treatment. You would never know which was Harry's affected foot now.

Lastly, we would like to say that we know it is hard, but persevere as it is definitely all worth it in the end.



Part 3: The Boots and bars

Here we are again. I can't believe that Harry has just celebrated his second birthday in May. I don't know who was more tired, us or Harry.

We are starting to have trouble of a night time regarding having the boots on. We have temper tantrums (that is just me), running around the room and hiding. The classic one is he now hides the laces and the tongues of the boots in the dog's bed. As we have a boxer it is hard to retrieve as he won't cooperate and get out of his bed.

After about half an hour of wrestling Harry gets into bed with his boots on and five minutes later he has undone the double bows and the buckles ... back to square one.

Harry's foot is coming along fabulously and looking at the photos I can't believe how bad it was. He scored six out of six on the score system and he now scores zero. It was all worth it in the end.



I must admit I have let him have the boots off a couple of nights, Harry hasn't slept through the night since he was born so I felt I had permission, however I felt so guilty that didn't last long! What keeps me going is that we are about half way through and I know it will all be worth it in the end.

Harry starts playschool in September and went to their induction day. I explained about his foot and told them not to treat him any differently from the other children. All that is different is that his left foot is a tiny bit smaller than his right foot, but all we have to do is put a small heel grip in his shoe.

Harry is a normal child, he runs, jumps, climbs and does everything he should do and many more things he shouldn't do.

Anyway I hope this helps to hear from someone who has been there. I know it is very hard at times but believe me it does get easier along the way as you become more aware of the reasons for wearing the boots and bar.

If anyone would like to get in touch with me for moral support please feel free to contact me by e-mail - Lilacerica17@yahoo.co.uk

Thanks you all
Heather Marchant



This leaflet has been produced with and for patients