



Hannah's Story

By Nancy Brown

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My name is Nancy Brown. I live in Gander, NL. I am married to my husband, Rob, and we have a 2 1/2 year old little girl named Hannah. Both my husband and little girl were born with bilateral cleft lips and cleft palates. My husband had numerous surgeries as a small child to repair his and remembers bits and pieces of some of the treatments received as an older child.

Before attempting to conceive a child together, we asked our physician about the chances of our child having a cleft lip/palate. We were told that it was not genetic and we had nothing to worry about. During my sixth month of pregnancy, we were referred for a detailed ultrasound to find out if our baby had a cleft lip (a cleft palate would not be detectable on an ultrasound). Due to the positioning of the baby, they were unable to get a 3D view of baby's face. However, we were reassured that the baby did not have a cleft lip based on the views that they were successful in getting.

Hannah was born at 41 weeks gestation weighing 8lbs 3.5oz. She was perfectly healthy and had a bilateral cleft lip and cleft palate just like her Daddy. We were surprised to say the least but it was not



something foreign to us. We both coped quite well with the surprise. Hannah had to travel on a plane at 5 days old to visit the provincial Children's hospital for an assessment. While there, she was fitted with a palatal obturator which she wore from 1 week old until her palate repair surgery at 15 months of age. The obturator had to be removed once daily for cleaning and was secured in her mouth with PolyGrip, a denture adhesive. Hannah was fed with a special cleft/lip palate squeeze bottle. It was a little different to use than a regular baby bottle but we quickly adapted to

it. However, it was always a challenge when leaving her with anyone because they were not familiar with feeding her.

Hannah had her bilateral lip repair at 5 months old. What an emotional time for our whole family. There were many tears shed when she returned from the OR...all tears of joy of course. An amazing job was done by her surgeon and we were beyond pleased. She remained in the hospital for 4 days and came home with arm restraints on her arms for 4 weeks. That was quite a challenge. Hannah adapted quite well to eating solid foods but had some minor troubles with textures. It was a challenge for quite some time.

At 11 months, Hannah had another trip to the OR to have t-tubes inserted in her ears due to recurrent ear infections. This is common in cleft palate children due to the anatomy of the ear and the inability of fluid to properly drain from her ears. Hannah had to be weaned from her bottle before her



Palate surgery at 15 months. She did very well transitioning to a sippy cup and was actually drinking all of her milk/formula from her cup by 12 months.

Her palate repair surgery happened at 15 months. This surgery was more extensive than her lip repair and she was in the hospital for 6 days. She developed some post operative complications unrelated to her palate. Again, she came home with arm restraints in place for 4 weeks. This was to prevent her from putting things in her mouth that could pose damage to her newly repaired palate. Since her last surgery, Hannah has done great. Her speech was slow to develop at first, but she has improved 150% in the last few months. Her speech therapists are so pleased with her progress. Hannah is like any other 2 1/2 year old. She is very sociable, curious, and sometimes a handful. We are very pleased with her progress in all areas and are so thankful for her wonderful physicians/nurses for their phenomenal care. We only hope she continues to thrive and that she will be proud to share her experiences with others when she gets older.

