



Carson All, one month

I am hoping that our story will help you in some way just like all of the other stories on this website have helped us! I was born with a unilateral cleft lip. I was the second child born in my family and the first to have a cleft. Back when I was born they could not detect clefts on ultrasounds so my mom and dad had no idea I had a cleft until I was born. I had surgery on my lip when I was 2 ½ months old. My mom said that she was strolling me around the neighborhood days after my surgery. I think other children started asking me what happened to my lip when I was in elementary school. I told them I had fallen when I was a baby and had to have stitches. It was an easy answer and no one questioned it. When I started wearing make-up no one could even tell! My lip seemed like a nonevent to me...it never interfered in anything I did in my life, and I didn't even remember the surgery!

In late 2007 my husband and I decided to start trying to have children. We talked more about my cleft lip and researched to learn more about clefts. We met with a genetic counselor who told us that there wasn't anything to prevent clefts from happening since they don't know what causes them, but that I

would have a slightly higher risk than a person with no history of cleft. We weren't going to let the possibility of our child having a cleft stop us from starting a family!

In April of 2008 we found out we were expecting! We were SO happy and got to tell our families of our news on Mother's Day! I put the possibility of our baby having a cleft lip or palate out of my mind. I prayed every night that our child would be healthy. We went for our 18 week ultrasound and were so excited to find out the sex of our baby and to see our child developing! The doctor had told us that they could tell at this point if our baby would have a cleft. The nurse gave us the news: IT IS A GIRL! We were thrilled...a little girl! Every mom wants a daughter to play dress up with, go shopping and get nails done together! Oh all the pink clothes! She was already spoiled rotten! Then my husband asked about her lip. The nurse said yes, she *thought* our baby had a cleft lip. My heart sank! My mom was in the room with us, and we all started crying. We were devastated! We were immediately sent us to another doctor for a level 2 ultrasound to see if there was anything else wrong and the degree of the cleft lip. I ended up having an amniocentesis to make sure there weren't any other genetic issues or problems. We then went home, and waited for the amnio results for 2 days.



One day before the surgery



Carson's first beach trip, August 2009

the birth of our daughter, but that didn't stop us from worrying each and every day of my pregnancy about our daughter. Was she really okay? Was she healthy? To what severity would her cleft lip be? The doctors didn't think she had a cleft palate, but were they sure? The day came. My doctor decided to induce me 10 days before our due date. My blood pressure was high and platelet count low. On January 3, 2009, Carson Elizabeth All was born weighing 5 pounds 14 ounces, our little "Peanut!" She was absolutely perfect! Beautiful in every single way! Her cleft lip was very minor and she was healthy.

Carson had her lip repair when she was 4 months old. It was the hardest 7 days of our lives, but our daughter was so strong! Much stronger than Mommy and Daddy!



Carson's first beach trip, August 2009

I thought this would be the happiest day of our lives. I was going to send an email out telling all our friends and family what the sex of our baby was, yet we were too sad to talk to anyone. We didn't answer the phone or return phone calls. We started doing research on the internet, looking at pictures, reading about different types of clefts and scaring ourselves to death. We finally got the results from the amnio and found out our baby was just fine! Healthy as could be! At that moment our whole outlook and attitude changed! We decided we were not going to feel sorry for ourselves anymore! What were we thinking? A cleft can be fixed...it could be so much worse. Time to pick ourselves up and make a plan! We found a doctor and set a date for her surgery. We were so excited about



Carson and Mommy

The doctors told us it would be a year before her lip is completely healed but it already looks great! She is the best baby in the entire world (I'm sure we all think that!). We have no regrets...I could cry just thinking about how special Carson is to our family! She is a true blessing, and we thank God for Carson every moment of the day. I remember reading a quote from another mom who shared her story, and it went something like this, "Not one of us is born perfect nor do we attain perfection in our lives. That is called being human." That statement got me through a lot of days and applies to many aspects of life! This experience has taught us so much about ourselves, our marriage, and best of all, being the best parents we can possibly be to Carson. Carson has given us a new perspective on life, and the world is so much prettier now that she's a part of it!

- Jennifer All

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