

## Carter's Journey – February 2009

It had been just about four weeks at home with Carter and his new cast when it was time to go back to Montreal and have it removed. Since we had just been there and knew we would be going again in March, Mike decided to stay home and work. My parents were able to come with Carter and I to lend a hand. We appreciated this very much as there is still so much that just one person can't do alone. We flew out of Regina and barely made it to Winnipeg as they had a lot of freezing rain making it difficult to land. We made it there just before two planes slid off the runway so we felt very lucky we even made it that far safely.



They closed the Winnipeg airport before our flight to Montreal could leave and then completely cancelled our flight. WestJet was great again and found us a flight later on that day to Toronto that would connect us to Montreal and get us there by 11:30 that night. They also gave us a hotel room to use for the afternoon and food vouchers to feed all of us. With all of our luggage, we couldn't all fit in a taxi so the hotel got us a limo to go back to the airport. We truly appreciated all they did to make our day easier even though none of our luggage showed up in Montreal! It all showed up the next day and was promptly delivered to our hotel.



Carter's appointment with Dr. Fassier was at 9:30 the next morning so we were just happy to be in Montreal in time to get his cast off. Carter had to get x-rays done first to make sure everything was still looking good and when Dr. Fassier looked at them, he was very pleased with what he saw. They went ahead and cut the cast off in many pieces while Carter screamed and screamed. He was just scared and as soon as they were done, I was able to pick him up and he was fine. It was very strange to hold him without his cast although he didn't really feel much lighter. It was a little scary to try and position his legs in a way that they were supported since they had been held and protected by his cast for so long. Carter was a little floppy, but his legs looked a lot better than I thought they would after that length of time in the cast. The following pictures were taken about 15 minutes after his cast came off. We expected him to be in a frog-legged position for quite a while and knew it could take some time before he would really start moving, but he proved us wrong again. He was stiff, but that wasn't stopping him from rediscovering his legs and starting to stretch on his own.



I was so excited to be able to put pants and sleepers on him again! It had been 11 weeks of diaper shirts so it was nice to see him wearing his clothes again. An hour after his cast was off, he started physio in the pool. The goal for that day was just to get him used to having his legs free and starting to get some movement back. He was so happy to be in the water and started swimming and kicking like crazy right away. He also did some physio on the mat as it was going to take some time for him to regain certain skills like sitting and crawling. His physiotherapist checked his leg strength by having him lift his leg to pop bubbles and they played with a lot of toys to help him find his balance and get him used to sitting again.



We had left Carter's car seat at the hospital when he had surgery. They had let us borrow a special car seat while he was in his spica so we returned it and started using his own again. He was able to sit in it right away and it was a good position to start bringing his legs in again.



We are not pushing Carter to stand right away. He needs to get his strength back so the muscle will help support the bone and we don't want to force his hip into positions it's not ready for yet. It was also very evident after his cast came off that his left leg is now incredibly straight and there is a definite bow in his right leg. Any pressure that is put on his right leg could lead to a fracture as it will continue to bend until there is a rod placed into it. The surgery will hopefully happen this summer or fall. Luckily, the pool is a wonderful place to get Carter used to having his feet under him again without putting any pressure on his legs or hips. He was reluctant to try standing, but eventually started to put his feet back on the ground in the pool as long as we were playing games.



By the last day of physio, Carter was getting up on to his knees a bit and had really found his balance again. He recovered very quickly and loved seeing his legs again. He kept pulling his pant legs up to check if they were still there!



Since we were at the hospital the week of Valentine's Day, we were treated to a show in the park by a surprise performer. It turned out that Dr. Fassier is an excellent singer and guitar player! He put on a great show and sang many familiar songs so the kids and the crowd could sing along. It's so neat to see our world famous surgeon taking the time out of his busy schedule to provide entertainment for his patients and staff.



We will be heading back to Montreal on March 15 so Carter can get his first Aredia treatment since his surgery. It will have been a full 16 weeks since the operation, which is the required time for healing before treatment can resume. He will have a bone density scan and we will see just how much bone density he lost while in his cast. Carter seems a lot stronger than we thought he would be and he is crawling around our house like nothing ever happened. He is wearing a hip brace at night, but he doesn't mind it at all. After he gets into his pajamas, he lifts up his legs so we can put the brace on for him. After Carter's bones have gotten hard enough, Dr. Fassier will put a rod in his right femur. It is a shorter surgery and will only require Carter to have a straight leg cast for 3 weeks. We are now looking forward to having that next step completed since it is so easy to look at his legs and know why it should be done.