

About five and a half years ago, when I was in 6th grade, I was screened at school for scoliosis. Unfortunately, they found a curve. Luckily my grandfather is a Shriner and they were able to take me right away down at Shriner's Hospital in Philadelphia. I was kept on close watch by Dr. Betz because my x-rays were showing my curve as increasing at least 3 degrees each month. He and Janet left me with a decision: to wear a brace that there was only a 75% chance would help, or have the stapling done and only have to wear the brace after for one month and could be back in the full swing of things one month later. After a long and hard decision, I decided to go with it. I am an active, outgoing, and persevering girl, I could do it. So the day of my 6th grade graduation I had my surgery. Although I went through a lot of pain those first three days after surgery, the nurses at Shriner's hospital were more than I could've ever asked for. I was back to playing soccer and doing all activities at camp within a month...So how was my curve after surgery? Just three days after surgery my curve DECREASED from 25 degrees to seven. At that time I was Dr. Betz best success. The staples were only meant to stop the curve from progressing but instead, helped correct it as well. Dr. Betz even had a documentary and a collage of pictures done on me!

So where am I today??? Since my surgery, I have accomplished more things than probably the average teenager does. About six months after my surgery I took up cheerleading, but had to relearn all my gymnastics that I had already known before. It didn't take long though; it was like riding a bike! Later that year, I wound up making Varsity Cheerleading at my middle school and played soccer as well through eighth grade. In ninth grade, I continued with Cheerleading and decided that I wanted to do a pageant. In November 2005, I entered in the Miss PA Teen USA pageant. I wound up being 4th runner up of 186 girls!! And the next year, I met someone else in the pageant that had the same surgery done!! Now, almost 6 years later I am a senior in high school, preparing myself for the long hall of the real world. I can't even imagine if I decided to go with the brace, where I would be today. Would it have affected my school work from pain? Would I have been able to even carry a book bag? Would I have accomplished anywhere near the amount that I have up until now? In my mind, I don't think so.

For anyone whose child is considering getting the stapling, I stand behind it 110%. Although it can be very painful, some things in life are worth enduring. It will be well, well worth it after that first month. No having to worry about the pain of still having scoliosis, not being able to play sports like other kids, or how this may affect you in school. This procedure is absolutely phenomenal in every way possible. If you are really considering this surgery, DO NOT BE SCARED! There is absolutely nothing to worry about!

If anyone has any questions, please feel free to contact Erica via our Discussion Group Forum.