

Five years ago, just before Thanksgiving I took my kids for their regular annual physical. Both got their flu shots and a clean bill of health, and we were on our way. The next morning, my daughter came down the stairs and said mommy I can't put my Chapstick on, my smile won't work.

At first, I was skeptical, saying quit playing around or we're all going to be late. But then, she walked up to me and said, no really, my smile is like broken! I looked at her face and I froze. I thought my kid was having a stroke. I remember thinking is that even possible. She's 10!

Then I remembered my training from work, the annual first aid / CPR class we have to take, and I started asking questions. Is your arm tingly, can you squeeze my hand? Everything else was working, but her face was drooping. I realized she had Bell's Palsy and I assumed it was a reaction to the flu shot.

I called the doctor and took her in that day. Luckily her pediatrician ordered a Lyme test, along with a lot of other blood tests. Some came back positive, some negative. But apparently Bell's is a common symptom of Lyme. I had no idea. I'm glad he did.

Even before she was diagnosed with Lyme Disease, she started on Doxycycline. As we learned more about the disease, we started noticing that other symptoms had presented themselves before the Bell's set in. We just didn't know the signs. We always heard about the bullseye or the rash – but she never had either of these. What she did have was a constant complaint of being tired and sore joints. But for an active kid we wrote them off.

I think she ended up taking three 21-day prescriptions of Doxy before the antibiotic took effect. As she could barely swallow pills at the time, and these are like horse pills, we learned quickly how to cut and crush the pills and hide them in applesauce. I don't think she ate apple sauce for months after that. But it was the only way.

She also had to do face exercises every day to regain the strength in her facial muscles. I remember her younger brother sitting on the bed at night with us making faces with her to try to make her feel better about doing her exercises. She couldn't close her eye for almost 6 weeks. And what kid wants to wear an eye patch to school everyday for 6 weeks, but she did. That was the only way to get her eye enough rest to regain its strength. She was lucky not to get an additional infection.

She went through torture, getting picked on by classmates, made fun of for covering her face and my outgoing extrovert, slowly became depressed and more introverted. Some of that still holds true today.

Now age 15, we still see the results of the Lyme. She still says her smile looks broken in pictures. She's border-line anemic, gets terrible nosebleeds and still complains of joint

pain. And let me tell you, when she's tired, she's tired. This girl crashes like no one I know. But she doesn't let it hold her back. She's still out killing it on the high school volleyball court, making the honor roll, and singing and acting in her high school musicals.

But when you look at her face, some days you still see the signs. She has flare ups that will probably never go away. And the worst part is all you can do is advocate for yourself, because after the initial diagnosis and treatment, it's virtually impossible for a doctor to prescribe you more Doxy and don't even ask for insurance to cover a new Western Blot test without a new tick bite. The only answer you're going to get is no.

So, we home remedy. She takes a daily iron supplement. We try to limit her sugar, which seems to be a trigger. Get her the rest she needs and wrap her joints for sports.

Lyme disease doesn't go away; it just presents itself in new ways. Someday, we hope there's a way to beat it, but it's probably not going to be through medical assistance unless something changes.

Thank you.