



Faces of CHD | Jacey's Story



Meet Jacey H of Halifax, NS

Age 26

CHD Diagnosis: Aortic Stenosis

I had my first surgery at 1 week old and then open heart surgery at 6 years old. After that surgery I was always a pretty active kid, my CHD never really held me back and was never really an obstacle. When I was young, I really wanted to play competitive hockey, but my family and cardiologist were concerned. I told my cardiologist "I'd rather die going down on a breakaway than die on the couch or playground". After that I never looked back and played competitive hockey all the way through high school and university. I still play pick up hockey today.

Although I played competitive hockey, I still thought I was fragile when I was young. I didn't let people touch me and tended to keep to myself. I didn't want to talk about my CHD. I realize now that I missed out because of it. If I could go back and talk to myself as a child, I would tell myself to that you need to talk about it, share your story! You're not really that different and people don't judge.

If I was to give any advice to a teen transitioning into adult CHD care, I would say be sure to stay on top of your appointments. If your next appointment isn't scheduled when it's supposed to be, follow up yourself. Clinics are much bigger, with a more diverse population of people with different types of heart disease. You need to be your own advocate. Don't be afraid to ask questions and go into your appointment with questions written down ahead of time. Do your research, be knowledgeable and educated.

Looking into the future, I am most worried about insurance and benefits coverage. I have my degree in Kinesiology and I am currently training to be a Registered Massage Therapist, but that

career doesn't always have benefits available. I am also concerned about pregnancy down the road. I have questions when the time comes and I am unsure if my CHD will be an issue.

I am happy to be able to share my story for Heart Month, I hope that CCHA continues to share stories and experiences. I really enjoy hearing about others living with CHD and their stories, it reinforces that you are not alone.

I am so grateful to have a positive outlook and attitude, not letting my CHD interfere with living my life. Others have it much worse and attitude has such a big impact on everything (recovery, health, mental health etc). I am lucky to have such great family support from my parents and siblings, they reinforce not to let my CHD be an obstacle and stay positive. I also have a great partner who is supportive and understanding about my CHD - many people cannot handle being a partner of someone with CHD, as it's not always stable.