



## Faces of CHD | Meaghan's Story



Meet Meaghan S of Thunder Bay, ON

CHD Diagnosis: PFO, Stroke

I wasn't diagnosed with CHD until I was in my 20's. I had recently moved to Canada from Australia and was working as an ER nurse when I collapsed at work. I had a tingling in my spine so they checked for MS. An Echo eventually revealed a large hole in my heart. I sought a second opinion but was told I was too young for surgery to fix the hole. Then in 2014 I had a stroke as a result of the hole in my heart. It was then that the hole was finally repaired with a patch. I was lucky that the stroke wasn't severe and that the hole has been repaired, the stroke could have been much worse or deadly.

I am humbled because my CHD didn't have an impact on my childhood, I wasn't affected growing up.

If I could go back to my younger self and give myself advice, I would say advocate for yourself. I was a competitive swimmer growing up, but looking back I realize I always had trouble breathing while swimming and holding my breath underwater. I also used to get debilitating migraines. It wasn't until after my surgery that they disappeared. I recommend that anyone who has severe migraines with unknown causes, should have an Echo to rule out a possible heart defect. Advocate for yourself!

As I look into the future, I worry about something going wrong with the patch, that it could dissolve or detach at some point.

It's important for teens transitioning into adult CHD care to ensure the transition happens. Advocate for yourself and make sure you remain in CHD care.

It's important for groups like CCHA to advocate for proper CHD, especially access in remote areas. Travelling long distances (13 hours drive) or a cost flight isn't feasible for many families.

My best advice is to live life to the fullest, make the most of it.

I am grateful to have a caring cardiologist who really advocates for their patients as well as great family support.