

Lisa's story

October 2005 , Leah was very lethargic, she would ask to go to bed at about 6pm every night, I didn't think anything of it as at all her health checks everything was fine.

At this point Leah was 5 years old.

During the next week or so Joni my oldest was due to go to Asthma Clinic as she has classic Asthma. I had to take all the girls with me as my hubby was at work. Whilst at the clinic the nurse asked if I wanted Leah checked as a few months previous she had been given an inhaler to alleviate a chesty cough. So I thought ok, whilst I am here you might as well. The nurse spent a lot of time listening to Leah's chest and back by now I was getting agitated as I thought she was spending to long on her. The nurse asked if my two other daughters could go in the waiting room as she needed a quiet room. At this point I asked her quite abruptly what was wrong. Claire said she needed a doctor to listen to her chest. Our family doctor listened intently!!! The Dr then took me into her room with Leah, and called another doctor in, he also listened to Leah's chest. It was at this point that the Dr said she thought Leah had a heart murmur. She explained she needed to be seen by a heart specialist to see what actually was going on.

A week later I got an appointment to take Leah to the cardiac specialist at The Children's Centre, Worthing Hospital. They scanned her chest and I could see immediately a dark area, my stomach churned with disbelief, but I hid it from Leah as not to alarm her. From that moment I went onto autopilot, had to be strong and was positive this could be fixed.

A week later, myself my hubby Jimmy and Leah were travelling up to The Royal Brompton Heart & Lung Hospital, for Leah to be seen by Dr Rigby (whom is the top heart surgeon). They ran lots of tests and scanned her again. We were taken into a room and told our worst fears, she had an Atrial Septal Heart Defect(a hole in the heart). At this point I still didn't break down, I had to be strong for Leah! The hole was the size of a 50p piece and one of her valves had a tear in it so it had to be repaired. We were reassured that even though this was the case it wouldn't be life threatening at this stage and she was put on a six month waiting list . We went home my hubby and my 3 other children and I were absolutely devastated, but we had very good support from the hospital, family and friends.

On March the 15th 2006 Leah had her op, it was a success, which was such a huge relief as you can imagine. She was meant to stay in for 14 days but as she made such a super recovery she was out in 6 days, the doctors were amazed at the way she bounced back from having such a huge operation, which has left her with a 6 inch scar on her chest. She now has to see the specialist every 3 years but can now lead a normal life.