



May 28, 2013 will be a day that will forever change our lives. It is the day that we found out that our 17 month old daughter, Felicia, had Cystic Fibrosis. The next morning we were admitted to the IWK in Halifax and went through the next 2 ½ weeks on autopilot learning all about chest percussion therapy, digestive enzymes, malabsorption and everything else CF. I'm not really sure we took time to process anything but how to keep our daughter healthy and alive. Whenever you hear your baby has a "fatal genetic" disease-it changes your life. For us, it was not any different, however, after being misdiagnosed for over 7 months with everything from croup to pneumonia to eye infections (when the bacteria was filling her lungs so much that it was coming out of her eyes), it was a relief to finally know what we were facing and that we had an entire team of CF related professionals behind us.

Here we are two years later and we have an active, loving, carefree preschooler! She lives life to the fullest and we take every moment we can to enjoy just being with her. It's difficult when people say "Oh she looks so healthy! You'd never know she was sick!" or "Maybe she'll outgrow it". She has an invisible disease that does not show on the outside and there is no way to outgrow it. For now, we

live with the reality that she has a fatal disease but we don't live that way. We do not treat her any different than most parents treat their 3 ½ year olds-she goes to preschool, she goes camping, she goes swimming and plays in a sand box. We do not put her in a bubble because of her disease. Truth be told, that was our first instinct as parents as we wanted to protect her from everything, but our Dr.'s at the IWK CF Clinic gave us the best advise...you live your life with CF in it, you don't live your life all about CF. We do take some extra precautions but almost all parents take the same ones-don't let her be around smoke, make sure she washes her hands-LOTS-and if someone has a cold/flu, we keep her away from them. Our days are longer than most with 1 ½ hours of therapy at the beginning of the day and before bed but for us, it's just part of our routine.

With the advances in medicine and the research and development surrounding Cystic Fibrosis we are hopeful. We know that if there is not a cure, there will be a control and we are cautiously optimistic to be part of that world. Until then, we do what every parent would do-whatever it takes to keep her happy, healthy and out of the hospital. We are avid fundraisers and take part in as many things as we can to ensure that research and development continues and that Felicia's future is as bright as her smile.

Leslie Hunter, CF Mom