

THE GIRL WHO FEELS NO PAIN

Gabby, at just 5 years old, is one of the most unique little girls around. In fact, only 34 other Americans live with the same condition—a congenital insensitivity to pain—as her. Like a derailed train, the nerves that carry pain signals from the surface of her body to her brain never arrive. Gabby never feels pain.

"When we first found out she doesn't feel pain it was like, 'What a relief,'" her dad, Steven, says. "People always think of pain. However, that pain is necessary, Gabby's mom, Trish, says. 'You do not even know how lucky you are that you can feel it.'"

When she was just a baby, Gabby started chewing her own hand while she was teething. "She had bit down through her skin," Trish says. "She would have bit down to the bone had I let her. It was just chewed up. It looked mangled and nasty, like raw hamburger on her hand." It got to the point where Steven and Trish decided to have Gabby's teeth pulled out to save her hands and tongue, which she chewed on "like bubblegum."

After literally poking her own eye out, Gabby now wears protective goggles to try and spare the sight in her one remaining eye. "Now the main thing is keeping her good eye healthy," Trish says. "Making sure that we don't ever get an infection or do anything to hurt the one eye she's down to."

In another instance Gabby suffered second-degree burns on her hand after grabbing a hot lightbulb. "She just grabbed a hold of the lightbulb like she was grabbing a baseball," Steven says. "On a normal person, that would be very painful."

Gabby's parents say they knew something was different about her from the start, when she was still in the hospital. "They do the K test the very next day where they poke the heel and she slept right through it," Steven says. "The nurse said, 'Wow, what a good baby. She's still sleeping.' Well, she didn't feel any pain."

"We've met families that have lost their kids," Trish says. "So at the same time, so what if our kid is blind? So what if she ends up in a wheelchair? We've got her. We can hold her. We can love her."

In fact broken bones and joints are the greatest dangers Gabby faces through her life. However, there is at least one upside. Steven and Trish have contacted a woman in her 30s with Gabby's condition. "She has severe back and neck problems," Trish says. "But the good news is childbirth was very easy."



