

[Edit] Sophie's Special Finger
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Tammy Hider enjoys laughter with her daughter, Sophie.
Provided by: Tammy Hider

Contributed by:Liz Holzemer

"Have you met my younger sister yet?" 3-year-old **Rece Hider** excitedly asks, running across the school playground out of breath. "Come see her! My sister, **Sophie**, has a special finger," he boasts.

And he's right. Seventeen-month-old **Sophie Hider** was born without a fully developed right hand. She has what her mother, **Tammy Hider**, 31, calls an extended digit or simply, a limb difference.

Tammy had a normal pregnancy as she did with her son, Rece. A routine ultrasound at 20 weeks indicated a healthy baby. Even a scheduled C-section at 38 weeks because Sophie was breech didn't raise any alarm bells.

But moments after the delivery, the Hiders' midwife announced, "Looks like there is something unusual we have to talk about."

Not only did Sophie have an extended digit, her left foot hadn't fully formed—she was missing several toes and a bone in the lower part of her leg. She had what is known in medical terminology, as left-fibular hemimelia. Upon further examination, doctors also discovered a soft tissue cleft palate in the back of Sophie's throat.

But Tammy didn't care how Sophie looked; she just wanted to hold her only-minutes-old daughter. "I had to hold her and let her know that I loved her," she recounts. "I held her and kissed her and kept repeating 'You're perfect for me.'"

Sophie was immediately whisked off for blood work and a battery of tests. The doctors told the Hiders they had never seen such a combination of anomalies in a baby before.

As devastating as the news was, Tammy took her daughter home knowing they would spend months in and out of doctors' offices throughout Denver .

Last April, at 10-months-old, Sophie underwent a three-hour surgery to repair her cleft palate. Two months later, Sophie spent her first birthday in Shriners' Hospital in Salt Lake City, Utah , undergoing amputation of her left foot. The surgery was a success and the best gift she could have received that day. Sophie now wears a prosthesis and will require fittings for a new leg every year until she stops growing.

Tammy and her husband, **Doug**, were fortunate to connect with **www.Unlimbited.org**, a Colorado nonprofit, which serves the needs of all children who are "limb challenged." The organization has been a godsend for the entire Hider family who attend regular social activities and participate in classes, which address issues Sophie and other children with limb differences will face for the rest of their lives.

Whether at the school they both attend together, at the grocery store or at numerous Highlands Ranch playgrounds, big brother Rece is the first to point out Sophie's limb differences.

"It is wonderful to see acceptance at such a young age and he doesn't perceive his younger sister as being any different than himself," says Tammy. "I wish all people could be and feel this way."

"Sophie bears the gift of being educational and what a gift she can offer so early in her life." And so does Rece.

As one of Rece's classmates leaves the playground, he grabs his backpack and says, "Bye Rece. That's the guy with the sister who has a special finger."