

## Adrian, Spina Bifida and BabyGym

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I had a normal pregnancy and a very relaxed birth. Adrian was born on 17 September 2008. However, Adrian would not suckle and had not passed any meconium. The nurse eventually took him at 12pm to give me a rest. I was woken with the Paediatrician staring over my bed at 4am. My little boy had an imperforated anus! What a shock! He was unable to suckle and I was not allowed to hold him for the first ten days of his life, as he was on all sorts of machines and pipes.

All I remember was how much I missed my other little boy, who was staying with family at home. Anyway, Adrian underwent a host of operations to correct his imperforated anus. But, my little boy and I had not bonded like we should have. I think that I was just too scared...in case we lost him in one of the operations!

At 5 months we started with BabyGym®. What an amazing experience! Jo-Marie extended the 5-week course to a 10-week course – just so that Adrian could get the most out of it. It seemed to change our relationship...all the massaging, dancing and TUMMY TIME! As Adrian had a colostomy for the first 4 months of his life, I never put him on his tummy. He just loved to look at himself in the mirror and with the little mirrors in front of him he really enjoyed tummy time. The I LOVE YOU massage for constipation is really a great help, as we battled with constipation (and still do).

At 9 months we found out that Adrian had a mild form of Spina Bifida, a tethered spinal cord and agenesis of the corpus callosum (that is the middle part of the brain that communicates with the left and the right lobes). This made crawling and clapping hands very difficult. This is where the most helpful and valuable part of BabyGym® has come in for me. In week 4 – 5 I learned midline crossing activities and rolling and to touch knees with the opposite hand! Without then knowing of his diagnosis...we were already making new pathways in his brain to send those messages. I believe that has made a huge impact on his development so far!

Adrian is now 16 months and we still do a lot of what I learnt at BabyGym®. He is currently with a physiotherapist (who has been fantastic!) and also started to see an occupational therapist. He can now roll over and go into the crawling position from sitting and lying down. Very shortly, we believe, he will begin to crawl. I know that his will to crawl is there! When he starts to walk, he will need splints to assist his walking.

Adrian is always so proud of himself when he masters something! He is an amazing little boy; he is always so loving and happy all the time! The relationship between him and his older brother (4 yrs), Grant is awesome. Grant has never once asked what is wrong with Adrian. He just accepted it and loves his brother so much. Grant has also really benefited from the BabyGym® - he really loves the massage part!

