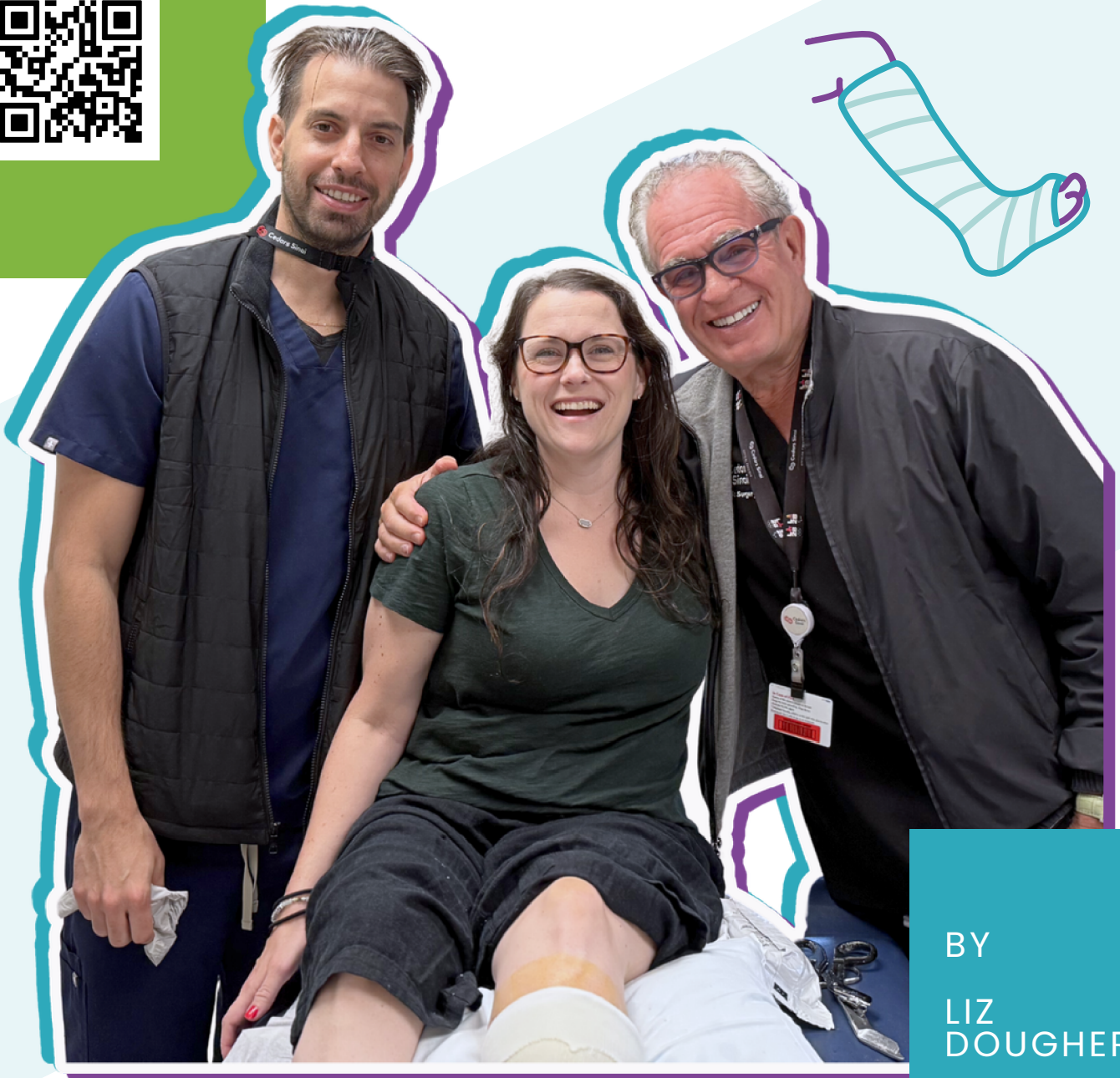


Liz's CMT Surgery

DIARY & GUIDE



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BY
LIZ
DOUGHERTY

*What I Wish I Knew &
What Helped Me the Most*



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Liz's CMT Foot Surgery Diary

What I Wish I Knew (and What Helped Me the Most)

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Surgeon: Dr. Glenn Pfeffer of Cedars Sinai, Los Angeles, CA

View Dr. Pfeffer's surgery posts on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#)

For a free surgery evaluation and virtual appointment with Dr. Pfeffer, please follow the [steps on this page](#).

Note: *This is my personal experience. I'm not a medical professional—please talk to your doctor for medical advice. I'm sharing this in hopes that it helps someone else feel a little more prepared.*

My backstory:

I was diagnosed with CMT at 12 and had major surgery on both feet in high school, about 17 years ago. They were OK for a bit, but my right foot really deteriorated from a bad surgery and the CMT over the years. It was inverted and was causing issues to my “good” left foot and knees. I was doing OK (or so I thought) and got around well enough. Doctors told me to wait until I couldn't walk to get surgery since I would continue to deteriorate with CMT. But I wanted more than “getting by.”

I did research and met with Dr. Pfeffer in person before I decided to take the plunge. I had a few women who talked me through everything, which was a huge help and why I am trying to pay it forward now.

I thought I was getting by before, but now I am thriving, and I can hike and be active with almost no pain! It was so worth it for me! **It is a lot on the body and mind** to go through major surgery, but I only regret not doing it sooner. I live in PA and flew across the country for two foot surgeries with Dr. Pfeffer and his team (2024 and 2025).

TIMELINE

Pre-Op & Surgery Day:

My pre-op appointment was the business **day before surgery**, early in the morning, so I had to fly to LA the **day before that**.

On **surgery day**, I was scheduled early in the morning, and my surgery lasted about 7 hours (mine had a complicated revision). Regular surgeries are about 4 hours, I am told. I went home that afternoon with a large cast/splint. The hospital wheeled me out in a chair and handed me crutches. I rode in the **back seat with my foot propped up on pillows**—that helped so much.

The First Two Weeks: Rest, Movies & Wet Wipes

A support person is essential, especially in the first week. Mine helped with meds, meals, late-night bathroom trips, and keeping me company.

Week 1 in LA was a blur of **sleep, TV, and healing**. I brought crafts, books, and headphones, and stayed in bed most of that week as the pain and pain meds made me pretty tired. I also stuck to the rules: **no showering** for the first 2 weeks—hello, dry shampoo and body wipes!

I had a nerve block catheter in my thigh for the first week. It numbed most of my foot, but I still felt some pain in the ankle and arch, so I took the prescribed meds. A **reminder app** was key for tracking all the meds in the first 2 weeks. I took the nerve block out about 4 days post-op. After the nerve block was out, pain peaked around a 6–7 out of 10, but was generally closer to a 3 or 4 out of 10.

By **Week 2 (1 week post-op)**, the pain pump was out, pain had lessened, and I had to get out of the hotel room for fresh air and a mental break. Still, I kept my **foot elevated** as much as humanly possible. By the end of this week, I was only taking pain meds at night along with Tylenol and Gabapentin for nerve pain, as my nerves were twitchy/tingly.



The Two-Week Milestone: New Cast, Fresh Start

My **post-op appointment** was **two weeks post-op**. They removed the first splint and stitches, put on a new hard cast, and took X-rays. Since everything looked good, I was cleared to fly home! Give yourself **plenty of time**—my appointment took about 2 hours, so leave enough time to get to the airport.

Home Sweet Home

Sleeping in my own bed was heaven! I kept elevated as much as possible and by this point was only on Tylenol as needed and Gabapentin for nerve pain at night (plus baby aspirin for 2 weeks post-flight per the doctor).

Make sure you have daily **support** to help with food, chores, errands, and emotional support. I stocked up on groceries and prepped my space before I left by moving things within reach and out of the way for crutches/wheelchair.

I returned to work remotely, working from my couch with my foot elevated.

Showering - I sat on a shower stool using a handheld shower head. I taped a trash bag around my leg, then a cast cover to keep moisture out. I also stuck to the quick shower rule to decrease steam/moisture.



My Healing Timeline (Everyone's Different)

- **Week 8:** Cast #2 came off. New cast + cleared to start putting weight on it.*
- **Week 10:** Switched to a walking boot. Around here is when I stopped taking gabapentin for nerve pain, as my nerve pain stopped.
- **Week 12:** Regular shoes again. Could also drive again if the right foot.
- **Week 14:** PT starts. Finding a PT with CMT experience can be tricky, so I called around and asked if they had experience with neuropathy, and we focused on calf/foot strength and overall balance/core strength.
- **6 months:** Slight discomfort remained (1–2 pain level out of 10).
- **12 months:** Pain was completely gone.

**Generally, you can start weight-bearing at 6 weeks post-op for less complicated procedures.*

Travel Tips (Especially for the Trip Home)

- **Extra leg room** is **so** worth it on the way home. I splurged when I got a pop-up upgrade offer from my airline app. I also bought an inflatable pillow to prop my feet up on.
- Request airport **wheelchair service**. It helped me get from check-in to my seat without stress. Especially helpful in large airports like LAX. I suggest checking your scooter or chair and let them push you through security to the gate.

Hotel vs Airbnb: My Experience

I originally booked an Airbnb, but when Dr. Pfeffer said I might need a **wheelchair due to a bone graft**, I realized it wasn't that accessible. I know others who have had great Air BnBs, and other hotels. Personally, I stayed at the **Sheraton Gateway LAX**. Wherever you stay, consider what is most important to you, such as:

- Restaurant in the building/close by
- Handicap-accessible rooms
- Full kitchen or at least a microwave/fridge access
- Extra pillows are helpful to elevate the foot
- Outside space for fresh air
- Parking. Some charge a lot, so see if that is worth it for you, or if they can offer an extended stay discount.

If staying at a hotel, ask for upgrades for the long stay! They gave me access to the Club Lounge

What I Packed & What I Bought There

Packed:

- Loose pants/shorts (for giant splint)
- Activities- coloring books, embroidery, books, and playing cards
- Dry shampoo, body wipes, waterless shower cap
- Lap desk (collapsible)
- Roku stick/HDMI cable to watch Netflix/Hulu in case there is no smart TV
- Extension cord & scissors

Bought in LA:

- Snacks (Cup Noodles, oatmeal, tuna, etc.)
- Paper towels, wipes
- Tylenol, baby aspirin
- Metamucil or Colace (for pain med side effects)

Other Tips

- The hospital gave me crutches, and I also ordered a knee scooter (via Amazon to the hotel). In hindsight, I should have rented a wheelchair locally. I tried the iWalk—at least for me, it was a fail, and I returned it.
- Do **not shave or get a pedicure** before surgery. I cut my toe, and they almost canceled the procedure!
- **CALL INSURANCE YOURSELF.** Especially if you are out of state, you need to make sure it is covered. You do not want a surprise bill! Some insurances may even offer a travel stipend, as mine did! I just had to request a letter from Dr. Pfeffer.
- No aspirin or ibuprofen 10 days before surgery

Final Words

This journey was **hard physically and mentally** but manageable with preparation and support. If you're reading this because you're going through something similar, I hope it brings you a little peace and clarity. It is scary, but it was so worth it! Even my friends and family have comments on my foot and how much better I am walking now- it was life-changing!

Feel free to reach out if you have questions: liz.dougherty1@gmail.com

A few helpful items on my [Amazon list](#)

For more CMT resources, visit hnf-cure.org