

KRISTINA

RECIPIENT OF: BONE ALLOGRAFT



TISSUE TRANSPLANT OFFERS NEW POSSIBILITIES



After a terrible car accident nearly took her life, Kristina began the long process of healing her broken arms and legs, as well as a broken ankle and neck.

Though her arms, legs and neck healed, Kristina's ankle remained a huge source of pain. Despite years of surgeries to correct the damage, the pain was so insistent that it forced Kristina to leave her teaching career.

"I taught for six years, but eventually had to leave in order to focus on getting my health in order," she said. "While teaching, I never really got to rest my ankle and was always in a lot of pain. I would come home every day in tears because all I could focus on was the pain."

Since numerous procedures on her ankle failed to heal the injury, Kristina decided to see a new doctor. Her new doctor recommended the use of a Tri-Cortical Ilium Wedge, a bone allograft, in the ankle fusion procedure.

Before her tissue transplant, Kristina already understood the importance of donation: her brother received two kidney transplants.

"I have always known I wanted to be a donor," she said. "If I am no longer alive and able to use my organs and tissues, someone else who could benefit from donation should certainly get that chance."

Kristina's recovery was lengthy, but she worked hard to give herself the best chance to heal. She was determined to have a better quality of life.

"After countless surgeries without good results, I was doubting whether I would ever feel any better," she said. "I believe the tissue transplant, combined with many other factors in the surgery, gave me the chance to heal properly."

Kristina's healed ankle didn't just alleviate her pain, it also gave her the chance to start the life she'd always imagined.

"I always wanted to start a family, but knew my injuries and pain were not going to combine well with a pregnancy," Kristina explained. "This experience finally enabled me to feel confident that my body could handle being pregnant and being more active, which is obviously hugely important to me."

Getting back on her feet proves all the more important as Kristina and her

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husband await the arrival of their first child, due in June 2015. Kristina also hopes to return to teaching in the future and is looking forward to spending time with her new baby.

She also reflected on what it means to be a tissue recipient and what she would say to her donor, if she could.

"I am sorry you are not here, but I am so grateful you decided to be a donor. Your gift has helped me achieve a higher quality of life than I thought I would ever reach again after my car accident."