[Crohn’s Disease: A Patient’s Perspective](http://www.conversantbio.com/blog/crohns-disease-a-patients-perspective)

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In 2008, my family and I found out that my 7-year-old sister, Jane Claire, had Crohn’s disease. She had been sick for a very long time and was exhibiting the typical symptoms of Crohn’s disease such as weight loss, reduced appetite, fatigue, abdominal cramps, and diarrhea. However, because Crohn’s disease is so hard to diagnose, it took about a year until the doctors could reach a definitive answer about the cause of her symptoms. Throughout the process she was told she was anemic, had lupus, and leukemia, and several other diseases.

 In 2014, she was taken to the hospital for a fissure on her small intestine. The fissure was treated and she was released. Unfortunately, this past April Jane Claire had to go back to the hospital for extreme abdominal pain. She was med-flighted to the Children’s Hospital in Birmingham, Alabama where it was then discovered that she had torn her small intestine in half. A surgery was performed and part of her small and large intestines were removed. She now has a temporary ostomy. The good news is this surgery could potentially ease her Crohn’s symptoms for the rest of her life. Jane Claire is a normal girl, and her disease does not slow her down. She is on the Huntsville High Junior Varsity Cheer Squad and is excited about starting high school in August. I wanted to ask her some questions to share with you all. This is for people suffering from Crohn’s disease and anyone interested in the subject.

**Olivia:**  Firstly, what has it been like growing up with Crohn’s disease?

**Jane Claire:** Well, it’s made me feel like I’ll never be able to fit in with others. I am different. I’ve always felt like it holds me back from what I want to do, but recently I have found that I am exactly where I want to be.

**Olivia:** What do you mean when you say “you’re exactly where you want to be?”

**Jane Claire:** To the best of my abilities, I’ve tried to push past the limits of my disease and get to where I want to be. Now, I’m a cheerleader for Huntsville High. I feel really successful in my everyday life.

**Olivia:** How has it affected your diet?

**Jane Claire:** I’ve had to stop drinking milk, and I can’t eat anything greasy. Oh! Or pizza sauce. But other than that I’m good.

**Olivia:** What kind of treatments or medication do you use?

**Jane Claire**: On a normal basis, I have an IV remicade treatment every 6 weeks. Other than that, I have prescription medication I use if anything goes wrong.

**Olivia:** You just recently received an ostomy bag. How has that affected your life?

**Jane Claire:** Definitely getting an ostomy has been one of the hardest parts of the disease and of my life. I felt like getting it was my fault, like I could have prevented it somehow. I’ve been really embarrassed by it, and I had to tell my closest friends so they could help me if anything went wrong. But as long as I am able to cheer and spend time with my family and friends, I am alright. I’m strong.

**Olivia:** What are your plans for the future?

**Jane Claire:** In the future I see myself becoming a pediatric speech therapist or a nurse. But not a regular nurse. You know like one of the nurses that works with babies. I also want to adopt kids and get married.

**Olivia:** Finally, if there is anyone with Crohn’s disease reading this, what would you like to say to them?

**Jane Claire:** I would like to tell them they are stronger than they think they are. Fighting Crohn’s is not as easy as it looks. Don’t let it get you down. You can do anything. You control your life, not your disease. You are not alone. So many people have this disease and are here to support you. Don’t get depressed. You are strong.