

BONNIE'S STORY

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a condition that can affect the brain and spinal cord, causing a wide range of potential symptoms, including problems with vision, arm or leg movement, sensation or balance. It's a lifelong condition that can sometimes cause serious disability, but thankfully, in many cases, it's possible to treat symptoms. The AlterG Anti-Gravity Treadmills are part of those treatments, helping patients to get moving again.



Bonnie's Story

Today I ran.

Twenty years ago, I was a mom of two young daughters, an avid runner working for one of the biggest footwear companies in the world, and fighting weird changes in my body that I couldn't understand. After months of testing, they finally told me the words I feared, "You have MS."

Multiple Sclerosis is a weird disease that affects everyone differently. For me, I have had times where I couldn't see, couldn't walk or pick things up. I'm affected by heat and I forget things. But one of the worst things that I couldn't do was run.

I missed the wind blowing on my face and hair, the sound of my feet hitting the pavement with each stride, and feeling the runner's "high" that one gets from the adrenaline boost that comes only with excellent exercise. I got involved with water aerobics and walking...but nothing was the same as running.

Then, in 2015, I was told I was going to try something new. Not only was it something new for me to try, but I was the very first patient who got to try it: The AlterG® Anti-Gravity Treadmill™. My physical therapist, Kim, stood by my side as I took my first steps walking and then finally running. Tears starting streaming down my eyes as I watched myself jog on a screen in front of me and felt my legs move at a pace I haven't felt in years. As I ran and cried I remember saying to Kim, "Remember when we filled out all those papers that asked what I wished I could do? Running was on there...this is amazing...we have to do this every time I come. You don't know what this means to me. I never thought I'd do this again in my life."

"This was one of the best days of my life...since MS. It gave me freedom."

It has been about 15 months and my health has steadily improved. So much so, that I did something else that I haven't done in years... I rode a bike. I participate in Bike MS Oregon every year riding on a tandem with my brother, Chris. Each year, a mile or so away from the finish line, I meet up with my brother to get strapped into a tandem bicycle so I can cross the finish line. I've been told that when Chris and I cross the finish line, I inspired others who live with MS to try to ride too. And for most of the day, I cheer them across the finish line until it's my turn to ride.

This year was different. I not only rode tandem with Chris for FOUR WHOLE MILES (the longest I've ever done), but I was able to, for the first time, participate in the "I Ride with MS" victory lap...A-L-O-N-E! Thanks to AlterG and my physical therapy, I was strong enough to pedal a mile around the Western Oregon University campus with two of my friends who also live with MS, and to cross the finish line on my own.

"I couldn't have done it without AlterG. You've altered my life in the best way."



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