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After surgery, nothing's slowing Derrick down

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13-year-old Derrick Howell is fast and furious on the race track, but his Crohn's disease was slowing him down.

Diagnosed with [Crohn's disease](#) when he was 9, Derrick, who races half-scale dragsters, "had a lot of pain," says his mom, Sheila. "Life, in general, was kind of challenging."

On April 24, [Daniel Saltzman](#), MD, a pediatric surgeon, removed three obstructed areas in his small intestine, and that has made all the difference.

"He's doing much, much better," says Sheila. "He's grown about a half inch since surgery."



Derrick, who races in Junior Dragster events, was back on the track less than a month after having surgery at University of Minnesota Amplatz Children's Hospital.

She credits his growth to a combination of being able to eat more, being more relaxed and absorbing food better.

"His growth slowed quite a bit since he was diagnosed. Now, he's been complaining about growing pains in his legs!"

Since his surgery, Derrick enjoys having more energy. "It's easier to do physical things now. I don't have to take breaks. I'm much happier than I was before," he says.

Back on track

Derrick, who lives in Champlin, has been in a Junior Dragster League since he was 10. The car he drives is about half the size of a standard dragster and goes about 80-85 mph in an eighth mile.

While Crohn's didn't keep him from racing, "driving is easier since my surgery," he says. Since it was done laparoscopically, he was back in the driver's seat less than a month afterward.

"There's a fierceness about his focus now," says Sheila. "It's amazing how much fun everything else can be when you're not in so much pain."



Pediatric Surgeon Daniel Saltzman, MD, performed Derrick's surgery on April 24.

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