

Mum Sharon speaks about her five-year-old son's daily struggles to mark Hemiplegia Awareness Week

Helping raise awareness for Harrison

by Louise McEvoy

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The mother of a boy with severe weakness down one side of his body due to a form of cerebral palsy is speaking out about the condition during Hemiplegia Awareness Week – which runs until tomorrow.

Harrison Denman, of Lancaster Close in Stevenage, is a typical five-year-old boy in many ways – he's cheeky, bright and obsessed with dinosaurs.

But Harrison struggles to carry out day-to-day tasks, like getting dressed, because he suffers from hemiplegia.

The condition is caused by injury to parts of the brain that control movements, and Harrison cannot use his right arm and has weakness in his right leg.

Mum Sharon said: "Harrison was born healthy. In the first few months he started to show a preference for using his left hand, but it was when he started to crawl that we became really worried. He dragged himself along the floor.

"Harrison was referred to Lister



■ Mum Sharon, pictured with daughter Lily Mae, son Harrison and husband Chris, has set up her own Facebook page called Hemiplegia Awareness.

Hospital and the doctor there said he was 99 per cent sure it was cerebral palsy. He was just 18 months old when he was diagnosed."

The Denman family were told Harrison's condition was a result of him having a stroke in the womb. Since his diagnosis, Harrison has worn a splint on his hand and foot, has regular physiotherapy, and has botox in his leg to try to strengthen it.

Sharon is raising awareness of hemiplegia by focussing on the

seemingly small tasks Harrison struggles to complete, such as opening a packet of crisps, taking a lid off a yoghurt, zipping up his coat and using cutlery.

She said: "In lots of ways he's a typical five-year-old boy, but there are daily struggles for him.

"Anything that is a two-handed activity, he struggles with. He gets frustrated because there are things he wants to do that he can't.

"It's a life-long condition and it won't get better. It is something he will have to get used to."

Hemiplegia Awareness Week is organised by HemiHelp – a charity aimed at supporting people suffering from hemiplegia and their families.

Sharon also uses charity HemiChat for online support. She said: "Having other families we can talk to is amazing. They have made us as a family feel less lonely. We are now doing the same for families who have just had a diagnosis."

Sharon has set up a Facebook page – Hemiplegia Awareness – with videos of Harrison attempting to complete seemingly easy tasks, and is giving out information packs to children at Martins Wood



■ Spreading the word: five-year-old Harrison Denham has hemiplegia.

Primary School in Stevenage, where Harrison is a pupil.

Sharon, who also has a six-year-old daughter called Lily Mae, said: "Cerebral palsy comes in so many different forms.

"It's about people having more understanding. It's been a

learning curve for us."

Visit www.facebook.com/hemiaware to find out more about Harrison's progress, and www.hemihelp.org.uk or www.hemichat.org for advice and support from either of the two charities.

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