

Scootering into the Distance with CMT

BY JEFF SEITZER

I had reconstructive foot surgery three weeks ago on my left foot, more or less five years after I had the same surgery done on my right foot. After a long day of scooting around on my bottom and hopping on one foot, I was in bed with my lower legs extended over the edge. I noticed a vein running along the back of my right calf, which I had not noticed before. My doctors always remark that my calves have exceptionally good muscle mass and tone for a 59-year-old male with CMTX, but my right leg has always been weaker than my left. Three plus weeks of relying on my weaker foot exclusively had obviously forced it to up its game, so to speak. Standing squarely on it with all my weight had produced a bit more muscle with enhanced muscle tone, a nice side benefit of the surgery.

This morning, I thought about how I could retain this muscle upgrade or maybe even advance it some more. One might think this would occur naturally since I will resume my active lifestyle once I am fully recovered. Walking, biking, weight training and yoga will contribute in different ways to this worthy cause, but here's the catch: Any of these forms of conditioning involve standing squarely on my feet such that my weight is spread evenly across the foot only to a limited degree. How long can you hold a balancing pose in yoga, for example, even when you are steadying yourself with a hand against a wall? What you really need to do, it seems to me, is press firmly and squarely on the foot for an extended period of time to get the full effect, and it's hard to do this except when you have no choice—when you can only stand on one leg, for example.

Fortunately, there is a way you can do this on a regular basis—

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Jeff Seitzer heads out for a scootering adventure with his family.

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SCOOTERING

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scootering. I have an adult Razor scooter I use to get around the neighborhood. The great thing about scootering for someone living with CMT is that you are standing squarely on your foot, as you would with other activities, such as balancing poses in yoga. But the key difference is the movement, which enables you to keep your balance for an extended period without falling over. More importantly, though, the movement enables you to maintain this position without steadying yourself against a solid object. This way, you are pressing even more firmly than you would if you were doing exercises against a wall or using crutches or a knee scooter when you are non-weight bearing.

So, the first order of business for me once I am recovered will be to break out the scooter and head off into the distance. I realize, of course, this may be like flashing the home run sign for many of you. My symptoms are very mild. That, along with two surgeries correcting the alignment of my feet, makes it possible for me to scooter effectively. Clearly, it may not be right for you, or perhaps you can only do it on a more limited basis. I switch feet every block and a half or so, for example. Perhaps you would need to switch more often or take frequent breaks.

It's important to check with your doctor before starting any new fitness routine, including scootering. You'll also need to consider protective equipment, such as a helmet or knee pads. If it is possible to scooter effectively, however, please give it a try. It might be just the thing to build some much-needed strength in your calves while you reinforce the proper alignment of your feet. The best thing is that you might have some fun doing it. I certainly do! ★

