

Young hockey player on road to recovery

ctvmontreal.ca

Published Tuesday, September 21, 2010 5:03PM EDT

A young hockey player who feared he might never walk again is making great strides.

Marc-Andre Emond, 16, suffered a spinal-cord injury in December 2009 after he was sent crashing into the boards by a push from behind by another player.

The impact cracked two vertebrae in his lower neck, forcing doctors to use bone from his hip to repair the damaged backbone.

RELATED LINKS

[Montreal teen recuperating after devastating hockey hit](#)
[Family of paralyzed hockey player calls for tougher penalties](#)

PHOTOS



Marc-Andre Emond, 16, practices walking at a physiotherapy session. He suffered a devastating injury when he was hit from behind during a hockey game.

He was left paralyzed from the neck down, and confined for months to a wheelchair.

At first, the young athlete was so weak that he was barely able to hold his stepfather's hand.

"I couldn't move my arm to my mouth," he said "Then, I started to move my hands, and my upper body."

Two weeks after surgery, it seemed unlikely he'd ever walk again, but on Dec. 26, Marc-Andre suddenly moved his leg during a physiotherapy session. The breakthrough was the beginning of great steps toward recovery.

Walking on his own

Today, Emond is walking on his own during physiotherapy and using a walker the rest of the time. In two weeks, Emond will leave the hospital, where he has lived since December and will return home. He aims to be back in school by December.

Emond, who is anxious to shed the walker he now loathes, is one of five per cent of spinal-cord injury patients who recover.

"Certainly his outcome last December was very guarded. His prognosis was very guarded. We're thrilled to see the result," said Montreal Children's Hospital Trauma Director Debbie Friedman.

His recovery is thanks in part to the type of injury, but also quick trauma intervention.

"You want to deal with the swelling and you want to intervene surgically as quickly as possible. Timing makes a big difference if there is a chance of a positive outcome," said Friedman

Once focused on returning to the ice, Emond long hoped to lace up his skates again.

"I think it helped me get through it," said Emond, who earned a standing ovation Sunday when he stepped on to the ice for the first time since his accident to the praise of his teammates.

Emond said he has a new goal, sports journalism, and is looking forward to his future.

Use of this Website assumes acceptance of [Terms & Conditions](#) and [Privacy Policy](#)

© 2013 **BellMedia** All rights reserved.

Bell Media Television