


## How They Do It

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to all his friends. It's a source of hilarity and comfort to him.

### Ezra Epilogue

Now 5 years old, Ezra is a vibrant and energetic boy. We've had our share of great days and huge disappointments. The holes in his heart closed on their own, his esophagus works, and though he has accidents, his funky tushy is appliance-free.

Friends say that I'm heroic, but it's not true. I'm just inspired by my son and moved by my husband, who is a more supportive dad than I could have imagined. I'm doing what any mom would do in this situation—I just happen to have a makeup artist on call, my personal regimen of double soy lattes, and a dark, dark sense of humor. 

### What is VACTERL?

**VACTERL is a constellation of birth defects with unknown origins. Each letter represents one of the symptoms:**

**V = vertebral abnormalities**

**A = anal atresia (anus either in the wrong place or nonexistent)**

**C = cardiac defects**

**T = tracheoesophageal fistula**

**E = esophageal atresia**

**R = renal (kidney) abnormalities**

**L = limb abnormalities**

**Source: National Organization for Rare Disorders**



Families battling VACTERL can find support by clicking on [www.vaterconnection.org](http://www.vaterconnection.org) or from the National Kidney Foundation at [www.kidney.org](http://www.kidney.org).

ANNABELLE GURWITCH, who is writing a book about having a child with a chronic illness, starred in *Melvin Goes to Dinner*, which the Sundance Channel is releasing on DVD next month. She is a spokeswoman for the National Kidney Foundation.