



Student card



Baby saved by bone marrow donation

18-month-old Olivia was a normal, happy child, who loved to play with the family's golden retriever and go to playgroup with her mother, Karen. But almost overnight she changed.

"She wouldn't leave my side," recalls Karen. "She clung to me and cried if I tried to put her down, and she always seemed poorly."

Soon Olivia started having nosebleeds and developed a rash. She was in terrible pain.

"Within two hours of seeing a doctor at the hospital," Karen says, "we were told Olivia had acute lymphoblastic leukaemia."

Over the next two years, Olivia had chemotherapy to treat her cancer, and many blood transfusions to replace the red blood cells and platelets destroyed by the treatment.

All seemed to be going well until Olivia developed a limp. The leukaemia was back. Doctors suggested a bone marrow transplant. Both parents were tested to see if they could donate, but the match wasn't close enough. The doctors searched the bone marrow registries to find a donor. They were lucky: it took just two months.



Olivia

|| We are just so grateful to the bone marrow donor whose generosity has let Olivia grow into the bubbly little girl she is today. ||

Find more real stories at:
www.giveandletlive.co.uk

NHS
Blood and Transplant



Fact file

1

To find out how healthy the marrow is, a doctor may take a small sample from one of the bones in the chest, hip, spine or leg. This is usually done under local anaesthetic.

2

A bone marrow transplant replaces the blood-forming stem cells that are not working in the bone marrow with healthy bone marrow.

3

You can donate bone marrow under general anaesthetic or using a cell separator machine.

Live debates

Choose one or more of the following statements to debate as a group. Write the arguments for and against the statements and decide which side you are on. Do all the members of your group agree?

- "If people are dying because they can't find a bone marrow match, we all have a duty to sign up to a bone marrow registry."
- "Being a blood donor and being on a bone marrow registry are pretty much the same thing. Why wouldn't you do both?"
- "I'm training to become a fitness instructor so I wouldn't want to run the risk of getting ill if I became a bone marrow donor."

Getting into their shoes

- Olivia's mother says, "We are just so grateful to the bone marrow donor whose generosity has let Olivia grow into the bubbly little girl she is today." A donor's and a patient's identities are kept strictly confidential. But if they could meet, role-play what that meeting would be like.
 - You are on a bone marrow donor registry and have been told you are a match for a little girl like Olivia. What's your reaction?
 - With a partner, take on the roles of Olivia's mother (or father) and her doctor. How would her mother describe the change in Olivia's behaviour and general health at the beginning of her illness?
- Go back for a check-up and talk about the success of Olivia's operation and how she has become her 'old self' again.