

We didn't know anything was wrong, so it was lucky I had to make a trip to the hospital for something completely unrelated. I hurt my foot and needed an MRI, I then had a blood test which showed something wasn't quite right. I was then sent to Starship Children's Hospital where I had a bone marrow aspirate. This is when I was diagnosed with Myelodysplasia - a rare bone marrow disease.

My family's first experience with this illness was with my brother Logan. In 2010 he was diagnosed with Myelodysplasia and in 2011 he had a bone marrow transplant. My mum stayed with Logan in hospital which was really hard because I am very close to her. They were away for 12 weeks. It was just me and Dad at home which was quite hard to adjust to. Life was changing for all of us but once my brother was better and could come home I tried my best to make up for lost time with Mum and Logan.

Then it was my turn. In 2014 I had a bone marrow transplant. I started chemotherapy and became really sick and nauseous, it became difficult for me to eat and keep any food down. This is when I got my NG tube, they suck but I needed to be fed. On the 22nd may I received bone marrow from my German donor. Mum and I spent 13 weeks at Starship and Ronald McDonald House.

During and after treatment I was always tired and slept often. I needed to recover, my body needed to rest but I also needed lots of support. So it was really cool that my friends were supportive and visited me in hospital. I was a bit nervous at first of how I looked and how they would react. Sure, some of them were shocked to see how sick I was, especially when I had no hair and tubes sticking out of me, but it didn't scare them away. Their attitude didn't change towards me and I just talked to them reassuring them that everything was going to be alright.

CanTeen gave me the space to talk about things I didn't want to worry my friends with. I felt comfortable talking about the good and bad times I have had since my diagnosis. The staff are amazingly supportive, helping me talk through anything and coming up with solutions to certain things. CanTeen have also helped show me that what I'm going through is normal, although it isn't most people's idea of normal.

My body has changed, I have struggled and still do. Getting back to normal has been quite hard. I still face challenges but with the help of CanTeen things don't seem as hard.

Although it's not good having 2 family members go through the same treatment, it really has helped. The relationship between my brother and I has changed a lot. We're a lot closer because of it. I can see it is hard for him to watch me go through what he had to. He does what he can to support me and has encouraged me to take up the extra support CanTeen gives.

CanTeen has been there for me and my family throughout my brother's and my own journey and still is [today](#). They've given us support we've both needed during some of the hardest times of our lives, showing us kindness, fun and humour.

I want to give back so others like me can get the support they need, because no young person should go through cancer alone.

Caitlin Jamieson

