



Blood Services, Alabama and Central Gulf Coast Region



Saturday, January 18, 2003

Toddler Battles Cancer, Needs Blood

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Life's roller coaster is no joy ride for little Taylor Watts

The toddler faces celebrating his second birthday, Jan. 19, in the hospital

(Jan. 16, 2002) - Life is a ride in the park for most two-year-olds, playing and laughing, concerned only with eating and having fun. Not so for one McCalla toddler.



Taylor Watts, son of Kim and Jim Watts, is riding the proverbial roller coaster and it is not any fun. The 23-month-old was diagnosed last October with neuroblastoma and now spends his days in an uphill struggle to fight the cancer, oftentimes with a quick descent to nausea, bleeding and low blood counts as a result of his chemotherapy.

Neuroblastoma is a form of cancer that occurs in infants, children, and very rarely, adults, according to the American Cancer Society's website, www.cancer.org. The cells of this cancer usually resemble very primitive developing nerve cells found in an embryo or fetus. (The term neuro indicates "nerves," while blastoma refers to a cancer that affects immature or developing cells.)

It is one of the few cancers in children that secretes hormones which cause bizarre changes in the body such as opsoclonus (rotary movements of the eyes), myoclonus (spastic jerks of the muscles), and diarrhea, according to the Cancer Society.



Taylor receives chemotherapy at Children's Hospital in Birmingham and it is going very well. An excerpt that his father, Jim Watts, wrote in his website journal January 17, 2003 states, "Some really good news. The doctors just came in and Taylor's white blood cell count jumped from 120 to 497, so the doctors are going to let him go home."

"He has to have a platelet transfusion first before he can go, and they have ordered the platelets and are just waiting for them to come. Taylor still can't have his birthday party because his (platelet and blood) counts are too low, but at least we will be home over the weekend!"

While Taylor's chemotherapy is killing the cancer cells, it is also reducing his blood and platelet count to dangerously low levels.

"At about 3PM yesterday (January 16), Taylor had to get another blood transfusion. We have been talking about the blood shortage, and we saw first

hand again how low it is. They had to piece together two different bags of blood in order for Taylor to get the amount of blood that he needed," Watts continues in his journal.

Just this Tuesday, Jan. 14, Watts wrote, "He (Taylor) soaked a pillow last night in blood, because he had mouth sores and no platelets. He is feeling a little better after the platelet transfusion he had last night."

Platelets are the portion of whole blood that aid in the clotting process that prevents or stops bleeding.

"You can tell there is a shortage of blood and platelets, because it took about 4.5 hours for them to come from the blood bank," Watts wrote.

That very day the American Red Cross, American Association of Blood Banks and America's Blood Centers issued a united call for blood donors to give blood. During the last two weeks, the Red Cross national blood inventory has dropped by more than 50 percent and the current national inventory of critically important Type O blood is at a one-day supply.

Taylor is O positive. He is also CMV negative and RH positive. Anyone interested in being tested to see if you could be a donor for Taylor, you have to be a match on all three criteria. All you need to do is contact the Watts and they will get their nurse to send information to the blood center. You may e-mail Watts at webmaster@taylorwatts.org.

"I would also like to thank everyone at the Red Cross for what you do, and what you provide," Watts said. "Without blood and platelets, my son might not make it through his cancer, so thank you."

Call 1-800-GIVE LIFE (1-800-448-3543) to make an appointment to give blood or platelets at a donor center near you. You must be at least 17 years old, 110 lbs., and in general good health.

To learn more about Taylor, Jim and Kim Watts, and their fight against cancer, go to www.taylorwatts.org. You may also send a message to Taylor and his family via the website.

To learn more about cancer, go to the American Cancer Society website at www.cancer.org.

For more information, contact:

[Keith Jordan](#) (Birmingham) (205) 918-1072

[Tad Roose](#) (Birmingham) (205) 918-1000, ext 2165

[Mary Lee Conwell](#) (Mobile) (251) 694-1869

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