

Gianna Torgrimsen's Story



What Is Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia?

ALL is a type of leukemia that starts from white blood cells in the bone marrow, the soft inner part of bones. It develops from cells called lymphocytes, a type of white blood cell central to the immune system, or from lymphoblasts, an immature type of lymphocyte. Acute lymphoblastic leukemia invades the blood and can spread throughout the body to other organs, such as the liver, spleen, and lymph nodes. But it does not normally produce tumors as do many types of cancer. It is an acute type of leukemia, which means it can progress quickly. Without treatment, it can be fatal within a few months.

The main treatment for acute lymphocytic leukemia involves the long-term use of chemotherapy. In the past several years, doctors have begun to use more intensive chemo regimens, which have led to more responses to treatment. But these regimens are also more likely to cause side effects, such as low white blood cell counts. Patients may need to take other drugs to help prevent or treat these side effects.

Treatment typically takes place in 3 phases: 1) Induction (or remission induction), 2) Consolidation (intensification), and 3) Maintenance

In late February of 2015 Gianna went in to our family physician for a routine checkup and immunizations. The day after Gianna was not feeling well and had developed a slight fever. We assumed that this was normal after receiving shots and would be over after a day or so. However the fever persisted and began to get worse. During this time we were in constant contact with our doctor who suspected she may have picked up something during her visit.

After about 5 days the fever continued to persist and Gianna was visibly ill and we decided to take Gianna back to the doctor. After a few minutes of examination our doctor advised us that we needed to get Gianna's blood tested and suggested we take her to Morristown Medical Center. Shortly after arriving at the ER in Morristown Gianna's blood was examined and all signs pointed towards Leukemia. That was confirmed shortly thereafter.

Gianna subsequently spent the next 33 days in the hospital undergoing intense chemotherapy. Gianna is now home but continues to travel multiple times a week back to Morristown where she is receiving the majority of her treatment.

It's was a difficult couple of months but she continues to improve and we pray that the treatments prove successful. She's got a battle ahead of her but she has a great family and community supporting her. It's a long hard road but our little "GG" is a tough little girl. We're confident she's going to beat this.

