

Toddler receives life-saving bone-marrow transplant from baby brother

November 23 2017, by Krista Torralva, Orlando Sentinel

Grant Gibbens celebrated his first birthday last November in the playroom of Florida Hospital for Children.

There were no other kids to play with. Grant's immune system was too weak from leukemia to risk inviting his cousins.

Grant didn't know he was missing out on a party full of children running around and bringing gifts. His parents, Jessica and John Gibbens of Palm Bay, were sad that they couldn't throw Grant a memorable party.

"It's hard for us because he doesn't know the things he's missing out on. But we know the things," John Gibbens said recently in a room on the sixth floor of the hospital. Grant played on the floor a few feet away, crashing a Tonka trunk and blowing bubbles with one of the nurses he has befriended.

Grant is on the brink of gaining some normalcy now, five months after doctors successfully completed a bone-marrow transplant from Grant's 6-month-old brother, Wyatt. Typically, patients can come out of isolation about a year after the transplant.

Grant's story is remarkable from the start. Childhood cancer is rare to begin with, said Dr. David Shook, who performed the transplant. It's even rarer for a child to need a bone-marrow [transplant](#), Shook said.

Grant Gibbens, now 2, is cancer free thanks to a life-saving [bone](#)

[marrow transplant](#) from his 6-month-old brother, Wyatt.

Patients usually get on a registry to find a match. Only about a third of kids have a match within their own family, Shook said.

Jessica Gibbens was only seven weeks pregnant with Wyatt when Grant was diagnosed last year. Jessica, 27, and John, 28, said they weren't planning to have a second child so soon.

As it turned out, Wyatt was a perfect match for Grant. After Wyatt was born, doctors used the [umbilical cord blood](#) for Grant's surgery, and the process wasn't invasive for Wyatt.

"His blood is essentially his brother's now," Shook said.

He said that as far as doctors can tell, Grant's cancer is gone.

Grant's parents hope his immune system will be strong enough so he can meet his cousins soon. And the family is thinking about going to Disney World. Grant, now 2, loves Mickey Mouse.

Jessica and John talk about telling their sons the story of how Wyatt's blood saved Grant. They joke about the boys' relationship as they get older.

"One day ... Grant is going to break something and Wyatt will say, 'I already saved your butt one time,' " Jessica said.

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