

30 Days/30 Stories®

Aurora

Diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia in April 2019 at age 4

I remember so vividly the day we brought Aurora Marie into this world. She was a "miracle" to Michael and Myself after 2 miscarriages together. She was, in fact, our rainbow in every shape and form. It was the beginning of April 2019 when we had just scheduled an appointment to register Aurora for kindergarten. I was so excited for her! She has always enjoyed attending Life Church in Nazareth and always referred to her friends there as her "school friends". Aurora never attended preschool so looking forward to church every Sunday was such a huge part of her week! Not just because of seeing her "school friends," but she made her love for Jesus very well know. Especially her love for "Jesus songs" as she called them.

I will never forget the morning of April 4, 2019. Just shy of turning 5 years old, Aurora woke up that morning with a very swollen neck. Just below her jaw, her neck had become swollen, resembling hard golf balls. Being frantically worried, I yelled quickly for my husband in the other room, and it was quickly decided that we were heading to the closest emergency center. Doctors thought Aurora had a case of the mumps. So we began antibiotics and understood that we had to keep all the kids away from Aurora. It was even suggested that Aurora even be confined to one room. However, I told the doctors that I couldn't leave Aurora alone in her room. So for 2 weeks, our other kids, Preston (13) and Chloe (3), stayed with their grandparents on both sides of our family. Aurora remained in our bedroom with us as we wore masks for 2 weeks during antibiotics to treat mumps. I remember during those 2 weeks feeling awful for Aurora. The antibiotic they gave her was so foul, it was very hard to get her to take it. But her spirits were always high. She made it a lot easier on me, because I was so sure that this was something that would, in fact, go away. The swelling started to go down which gave me so much hope in the fact that she had the mumps, they were being treated, and that soon our life would go back to normal.

On April 12th, we received a phone call from Aurora's primary doctors office that she in fact did NOT have the mumps, that we were being referred to see infectious disease doctors at LVHN. I remember being so upset. I was so focused on the fact that my other children had been separated from our house for so long, and so upset that we were in the dark as to what was wrong. I remember feeling anger Upset that I confined her for so long away from everyone. Upset that there were unanswered questions. At this time, no one knew what was wrong. The unsettling feeling ate away at me for days. My heart literally sank. Every worst thought that could enter my mind on what could be wrong played. And it played like a record over and over, night after night that weekend.

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Monday April 15th, we went to our referral appointment. Blood work was completed, and an ultrasound was done on Aurora's neck. We were finally told we could bring our other children home. This was the best news! Monday was a reunion for our family, or so we thought. Early Tuesday morning, I received a phone call from the infectious disease doctors at the hospital. They informed me that Aurora's white blood cell count was low. They needed me to take her ASAP to get her blood work redone to make sure that the counts they received were accurate. My heart dropped into my stomach. I had absolutely no idea what that even meant. The tears began to fall as I was fearful for just the fact of explaining to Aurora that she needed to get more blood drawn. She had been poked SO many times in the last 2 weeks. My nerves were all over the place.

Wednesday morning was my husband's birthday...we received a phone call from them again. They informed us that the results came back that her white blood cell count was in fact low and, rather than coming to see them on Monday, that we would be meeting with the doctor on Friday to speak in person. I remember hanging up and feeling like I was going to vomit. My husband felt that if we were waiting till Friday, then the news wasn't bad. That if it was, we wouldn't be waiting. So we continued on celebrating that day. We decided to try our best to have the most "normal" birthday that we could for Michael. I cannot explain to any of you reading this story how I felt when Michael was shopping at Wegmans with our girls, picking out his birthday cake, and getting steaks to grill when I got another phone call. That one phone call..."We need you to please come to the hospital, Aurora is going to be admitted tonight." There are no words that could explain how I felt at that moment or how I felt calling my husband to tell him I needed him to come home so we could pack up for the hospital. No father wants to worry over his daughter's health on his birthday, let alone have to admit her to a hospital.

Thursday morning, April 18th, 2019, Aurora underwent a bone marrow biopsy. It was later that afternoon that we were told our 4 year-old daughter was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia. I remember that look of Michael turning and locking eyes with me... and the reaction we both gave together. Your heart sinks, the tears flow, your worst nightmare has happened...your child has cancer.

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What was supposed to be a weekend celebrating Easter turned into the reality of our daughter being sick. 2 1/2 years of treatments. 5 years of follow up after. A long journey of your little girl battling such an unfair disease. Our soccer-loving, Jesus-singing, loveable, gifted, rainbow little girl, at only 5 years of age is now fighting a huge battle. Your ENTIRE life can change in just the quick blink of an eye. I left my place of employment so that I could be a caregiver to my daughter during her years of treatment. And Aurora is doing so amazing and is such a fighter. Her love for superheroes and Spider-Man shines through her strength and courage every day as she fights cancer. Aurora is currently ending her interim maintenance phase. This phase of her treatments she has been receiving is increased Methotrexate and Vincristine (chemotherapy medications) depending on her counts for that day of treatment. Aurora has been hospitalized once during this phase of treatments from a seizure she had at home. She underwent EEG's and MRI's for observations on her brain. Currently she is being treated as a precaution for seizures from Methotrexate toxicity. We will be going to get a repeat EEG in 8-12 weeks and we know that our little Fighter will come out of that with amazing results. She is getting ready to go into her next phase of her treatments which will include her going back on steroids every other week. She is our little Spidey, and we know that even going back on Steroids, she will knock this phase out. As her team shirts say, "Not All Superheros Wear Capes, They Fight Leukemia."

#AurorasFight

Written by Aurora's mom, Jessica

If you would like to donate in Aurora's honor Click Here

Photos by: Ryan Fisher of the Lehigh Valley Photography Group (www.lvpgphotos.smugmug.com/FB:@lvpgphotos/IG:@ig_lvpg)

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