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## Stem cell transplant first of its kind in Canada

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TORONTO-- Lisa Farquharson says she's lost track of the hours, the treatments that her infant son has undergone since he was diagnosed with eye cancer. "We believe this procedure is going to save his life, that's where we've got to keep our focus. If we lose our focus, we fall apart."

- INDEPTH: [Stem Cells](#)

Jesse was diagnosed with the cancer when he was four months old. It quickly spread. He's now nine months old and doctors are hoping to save his life by performing a stem-cell transplant, believed to be the first of its kind in Canada.



Jesse Farquharson

What makes the transplant unique is that the stem cells are coming from Jesse's own blood.

What the family and medical staff did is exactly what a growing number of Canadians have been doing. Storing blood from the baby's umbilical cord. The blood is rich in stem cells, the parent cells that produce red blood cells.

"With this type of therapy he has a much better hope than he would have had five years ago, 10 years ago," says Dr. John Doyle of Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children.

Jesse's in remission, but doctors say there may be traces of cancer left. So the plan now is to give him high doses of chemotherapy to destroy any remaining tumour cells. The treatment will also kill all the other stem cells in his body that may be diseased.

That's where Dr. Doyle says the transfusion comes in. "Those cells, they know where to stick when in the body. And they'll locate themselves into bone marrow quite naturally and they'll begin to divide and grow."

They will produce new, healthy blood cells.

Jesse's parents are praying it will work. Praying this will all, finally be over. "He has to get well and he has to go on. I just don't know what would happen if he didn't get well. I don't think we could really take it," says his father Gary.

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