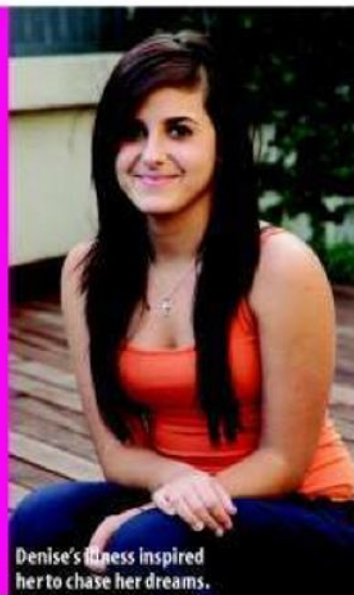


When I was a baby I was diagnosed with diamond-blackfan anaemia, which is a rare blood disorder that affects my bone marrow's ability to produce enough red blood cells.

When I was seven, I had glandular fever. Afterwards I felt lethargic and looked very pale. My mum took me to my specialist who felt lumps the size of peas in my neck and underarms. After a biopsy I was diagnosed with Hodgkin's



Denise's illness inspired her to chase her dreams.

"I SURVIVED CANCER"

Denise, 16, has learnt to live with a rare blood disorder that can cause cancer.

lymphoma; the same cancer singer Delta Goodrem had.

I had chemotherapy for six months, which damaged my bone marrow. As a result, I had to have continuous bone marrow transfusions and a bone marrow transplant. It's a dangerous procedure, but luckily my brother's bone marrow was a perfect match for me.

The operation required isolation for six weeks in hospital and six weeks at home. During the first week, my bone marrow was destroyed by a mixture of potent drugs. Then, one litre of my brother's bone marrow was transfused into my body over five hours.

I couldn't eat as I had mouth, throat and stomach ulcers. I was given a lot of painkillers but still felt unwell and upset.

A week later tests showed

that my body had accepted my brother's marrow.

I was discharged to go home, but I couldn't have contact with anyone outside of my immediate family. It took four years before I stopped needing drugs and therapies.

I was on a constant emotional rollercoaster - from angry to sad to happy to confused. One of the

hardest things to accept was losing my hair.

What made my treatment bearable was the support from my family. I couldn't have

pulled through without them. My doctor was truly amazing, too.

I've been cancer-free for five years now. I live life like a normal teenager and nothing can stop me from achieving my goals. I've learnt not to take anything for granted and to live life to the fullest. I'm confident because I know I've survived difficult experiences.

Help fund research for childhood cancer by supporting Jeans for Genes Day on August 6. See jeansforgenes.org.au for more.