

## Wanted: A stranger to save this boy's life

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Perth teenager Ryan Lilburne is in a desperate race against time to find a suitable bone marrow donor before he develops a life-threatening aggressive leukaemia.

The 15-year-old was born with the blood disorder Kostmann's syndrome, which prevents his body fighting infections, and in February he received the news he had always dreaded — his bone marrow was evolving into a pre-leukemic state and he urgently needed a transplant to save his life.



His mother Natalie said hearing the test results had been devastating. "It was like someone ripped out my heart and threw it away," she said.

The Lilburnes had always known Ryan was likely to develop leukaemia but they tried to keep it at the back of their minds and enjoy each day.

Mrs Lilburne said the hardest thing for family members was finding out they were helpless to save Ryan because none was a suitable tissue match.

There are no matching donors on the Australian Bone Marrow Donor Registry.

Mrs Lilburne said she was now appealing for more West Australians to register. "We are relying on the goodness of a stranger to offer their bone marrow to save our son's life," she said. "Ultimately we might not be able to help Ryan but we might be able to help someone else (who needs a transplant)."

Ryan has started chemotherapy to buy time while doctors search for a donor but the chance of a successful transplant decrease the longer it takes.

Tina Carter, director of the blood and marrow transplant unit at Princess Margaret Hospital, admitted Ryan urgently needed a donor. "He is at risk of developing a severe, aggressive leukaemia that is very hard to treat," she said.

Ryan admitted he was scared but tried to stay positive, thinking of the benefits of a transplant. "I could be healthier after it and live a normal life," he said.

City of Perth Surf Life Saving Club has organised a registry session on May 10 or potential donors can call the registry direct on 9421 2886.

GABRIELLE KNOWLES