

Hunt for stranger to save boy's life

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A teenager with a rare bone marrow disease is looking for a stranger to save his life.

Matthew Hunt, 15, of Brookfield, Preston, has a condition called aplastic anaemia, also known as bone marrow failure, which means his body fails to produce vital blood cells.

Doctors have now told his family that Matthew's only hope is a bone marrow transplant – but his tissue type is so rare that they have failed to find a match for him despite searching worldwide.

Matthew's dad Andrew Hunt and mum Wendy Lafi are now urging more people to sign up as bone marrow donors as they could save Matthew's life or someone in the same position.



Matthew Hunt, 15, from Ribblesdale, pictured with his mum, needs a bone marrow transplant

Andrew, 43, of Burnslack Road, said: "Matthew's condition was picked up a couple of years ago in November 2005 after he began feeling very tired and would bruise easily and felt sick.

"Before that, he was healthy and well and was living a normal life."

Aplastic anaemia is where the bone marrow does not produce sufficient new cells to replenish blood cells. Anaemia typically refers to low red blood cell counts, but aplastic anaemia patients have lower counts of all three blood cell types – red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets.

Doctors from the Royal Manchester Children's Hospital initially put Matthew on a course of treatment which involved taking lymphocytes – white blood cells – from a horse and cleaning them before injecting them into his body.

This treatment is supposed to make Matthew's body recognise them as a foreign body and fight them, which normally kickstarts the bone marrow into working again.

However, the treatment failed to work so doctors tried again six months later, this time with blood cells from a rabbit and it proved successful.

Andrew said: "Matthew's count began improving and for the last 15 months, he was doing well. Before that, he had needed 30 to 40 units of blood transfused to him.

"However, a few months ago, a routine check-up showed he had suffered a relapse."

Tests revealed Matthew's haemoglobin level was very low and specialists told his family

the only way forward was a bone marrow transplant.

He now needs a blood transfusion every two and a half weeks and as his blood count is so low, if he gets an infection, it can be highly dangerous.

Now specialists have discovered Matthew has a rare tissue type and there is currently no potential donor who is an exact match for him.

They are now looking for a near match and have found just four worldwide.

Mum Wendy, who has four other children, said: "We want more people to come forward and become bone marrow donors.

"It is a real shame for Matthew when his blood count is low as he has no energy and feels tired all the time.

"Since the age of five, he has wanted to become a policeman and we desperately want him to have a chance to make his dream come true."