



*Help us find
a cure for
transverse
myelitis!*



www.ReadingForRachel.org

Hi! My name is Matthew and I am eight years old. My brother Kevin (he's 6) and I wanted to know if you could help us. You see - our sister, Rachel (she's almost 3 years old) has Transverse Myelitis (TM). Rachel was coming down with a cold and two days later on October 9, 1999 (a day we will always remember), she woke up and was totally limp. She could only move her arms a little bit. My mom and dad took her to the hospital and after many tests the doctors told them she had Transverse Myelitis and was paralyzed from the neck down. The doctors also told them they were not sure if she would ever be able to use her legs. This was a very sad time for our family and although Rachel has shown a lot of improvement in the last two years, she is still paralyzed.

(My mom had to write this part so it would be right.) Transverse Myelitis is a neurological syndrome caused by inflammation of the spinal cord and may occur in isolation or in the setting of another illness. Typically, the outcome is eventual paralysis, sensory loss, and bowel and bladder dysfunction. Many individuals report experiencing chronic pain associated with their TM. The condition can occur to anyone of any age, and it can occur at any point along the spinal column. TM is rare; we believe that there are only approximately 34,000 people in the United States with TM. Recovery may be absent, partial or complete and generally begins within 1 to 3 months. To learn more about TM, you could visit The Transverse Myelitis Association Website at: www.myelitis.org.

In Rachel's case, the doctors feel the virus she had at the time caused her immune system to attack her spinal cord, causing her spinal cord injury. During the past two years, we are so happy and grateful that Rachel has gotten a lot stronger, especially her upper body. She has developed really strong arm muscles since she uses her arms a lot when she moves around the floor. Rachel's trunk muscles are a lot better too although they are still a little weak. We can

tell because it is hard for her to sit up really straight and she doesn't cough very loud. Another great thing is that since Rachel can talk now, she can tell us what she feels. We are happy to say that she can feel us tickle her even on her feet when she is not looking! Some of Rachel's leg muscles are working but she is not able to stand without long-leg braces that keep her knee locked. But that is ok for now, since my mom and dad take Rachel to physical therapy 3 times a week so the therapists can train Rachel how to walk using these long braces and a walker. It will take a lot of practice, but Rachel is a very determined little girl and she WILL do it! Although Rachel is still in diapers, we do know that her bladder is very small and it doesn't work right so she has to take medicine every day and my parents have to catheterize her four times a day. She also goes for bladder stimulation treatments a couple of times a year to help her bladder get better. We hope someday she can be potty trained, but for now, that is a long way off. In the meantime, we wait and do what we can to help raise money for a cure for Rachel and for others with TM. We hope and pray that someday she will have most of her mobility back so she won't have to work so hard at having fun! We all keep staying positive and motivated (especially Rachel) and will NEVER give up hope for a cure.

As you can see, we love our little sister and that is why we want to continue to do something very special to help Rachel and everybody else who has TM as we try to be very patient. In March of 2000, in honor of Rachel's first birthday, Kevin and I started Reading for Rachel to raise research money to help doctors find a cure for Transverse Myelitis. Once again, we are declaring March as Reading for Rachel month. If you would like to help us, please read a lot of books to your kids (or they can read them by themselves if they are old enough) during the month of March. We would like them to get sponsors to pledge and pay for each book they read during the month. This is a great way to have fun reading while helping people like our sister, Rachel at the same time! The gift of hope is one of the best birthday presents we could give our sister and we also want to help the many other children and adults who have TM.

At the end of March, after your kids are all done collecting from their sponsors, please send a check payable to **The Transverse Myelitis Association** and mail it to the address below. All contributions are tax deductible.

The Transverse Myelitis Association
Paula Lazzeri, Treasurer
10105 167th Place NE
Redmond WA 98052-3125