

Facing a rare blood disease has made Sydney determined to help find a cure.

About two years ago, my mom noticed that one side of my face was swollen. So the doctor ordered a lot of tests and discovered that I have a disease that causes my blood cells to act in a way that's not normal, and that's what caused the swelling. The disease is called *Langerhans cell histiocytosis* (hiss-tee-oh-sy-TOE-sis). It's not cancer, but doctors have figured out that it can be treated with some of the same medicines. I started *chemotherapy* right away, which meant that I had strong medicine injected into my body every week.

That was a hard time for me. I was scared and unhappy, and the medicines I was taking made me feel tired, achy, and sometimes cranky. I missed school every time I went in for treatment. But that's when my necklace project really took off.

Before I got sick, I had been making necklaces out of rocks that I'd found while walking on the beach. I used to sell the necklaces and keep all the money for myself. But I realized that I could use these necklaces to raise money to research my disease. If scientists knew more about it, they could come up with better treatments. By raising money, I'd be helping other kids like me.

I get help from friends and family to make the necklaces, and we've made a lot of them. Necklace sales already have raised more than \$52,000 for research, and every penny represents another step closer to a cure.

Thanks to the treatment, I don't have symptoms of my disease



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Sydney M.
Age 12

anymore. I get a few checkups a year, and the longer I go without the disease coming back, the more likely it is that it won't ever reappear.

I try not to think about it too much, though—I just keep my head up and focus on what I can do to help others, one necklace at a time.