



Gabrielle Bayless

At two-years old Gabrielle began to develop carsickness. Her mother, Edie, mentioned this new development to their trusted pediatrician but was assured that everything seemed normal. Days later, Gabrielle's grandparents noticed that her left eye seemed to be wandering. Worried that the weakness in her eye was worsening, Gabrielle's parents decided to see an eye specialist. The doctor immediately ordered an MRI to be performed. By the end of the day, Gabrielle was admitted to The Children's Hospital.

The MRI showed an obvious growth, a benign tumor or optic glioma. Left untreated, the tumor could cause eye protrusion and progressive loss of vision. The urgency of her case called for immediate review by a Children's oncologist. Gabrielle's mother recalls, "Key words stick in these conversations: mass, oncologists, treatments."

Gabrielle began chemotherapy at Children's almost immediately. At the end of one year, her treatment was complete. Seventy-five percent of kids in Gabrielle's position never need a repeat chemotherapy treatment, but Gabrielle was not so fortunate. A follow-up scan revealed that the tumor was growing. This called for another intense year of weekly chemotherapy at The Children's Hospital.

The pressure of the growing tumor had robbed her of sight in her left eye and was now stripping her ability to see out of her right eye. In an effort to help save Gabrielle from going blind, radiation was recommended.

Gabrielle continued to struggle with the painful side effects of the radiation treatments and extreme weight gain. Even more devastating, young Gabrielle was now legally blind. The radiation that Gabrielle received had also permanently damaged her bones' ability to grow; she would have to take growth hormones each day through adolescence to grow at a normal rate.

After several months, Edie believed that Gabrielle was regaining her vision. Gabrielle went back to Children's for a check-up and Edie's suspicions were confirmed: Gabrielle's vision had completely returned to 20/20 in her right eye. Her doctors were amazed and thrilled, calling it "a true miracle."

Gabrielle is now a happy and healthy little girl. She especially appreciates the beautiful things in life: rainbows, sunsets, birds, butterflies and flowers. Every year, Gabrielle returns to The Children's Hospital at Christmas to give special gifts to the caregivers who helped her. Gabrielle will always treasure the gift they have given her, the gift of sight.

