

Emilie still suffering from complications of bacteria infection

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BONNE TERRE - An area 2-year-old girl who contracted a strain of E. coli in September is still suffering from complications of the bacteria infection. Emilie Allen, of Bonne Terre, was able to come home on Nov. 2 from Cardinal Glennon Hospital in St. Louis after a month and a half stay.

Emilie suffered kidney failure soon after contracting the strain of E. coli know as E. coli 0157:H7 and was forced to go on dialysis. Emilie's kidney though, started functioning once again and the 2-year-old girl was able to come off dialysis on Oct. 19. At one point Emilie was also placed on a ventilator, but it was removed on Oct. 8.

Emilie's mother, Valerie (Pinkston) Allen, said despite the great strides her daughter has made she still is suffering from the complications of the bacteria infection.

"Emilie is doing OK," Allen said. "Her blood pressure is still very high. She is not producing red blood cells like she should. We had to take her back up to Cardinal Glennon Hospital on Sunday so she could get a shot that will help her produce the red blood cells. She is receiving the shots every two weeks. The doctors thought by now she would be able to produce the red blood cells on her own. She goes back up to Cardinal Glennon on Dec. 9, so hopefully we will know more then."

Allen said her daughter's kidneys are now functioning like they should.

Several area residents and organizations have donated money to benefit Emilie and help with medical expenses incurred.

"The Southfork restaurant in Desloge and Sheriff Dan Bullock and the Deputies Band held a benefit on Nov. 6," said Allen. "The event raised \$478 for the benefit fund. The Speedtrap in Bonne Terre recently held a benefit in which \$1,300 was raised. The Riverview Chapter of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans made a matching \$1,000 donation. Patann Monroe and Sonya Barh had a benefit tree that raised \$1,300. Jones and Company held a bake sale and yard sale which raised \$500. The C-Barn in Desloge has placed a donation cup on their counter and have raised \$160 so far. Mineral Area Regional Medical Center Home Health donated \$110. The Bonne Terre Eagles donated \$1,560. I'd also like to thank Angie Larkin and Donna Black for setting up the benefit account at First State Community Bank. "

Allen said in addition to those mentioned, there are numerous other individuals and organizations which have made donations to benefit Emilie.

"I just want to thank everyone," Allen said. "This community has been wonderful. We have so many people to thank. We are overwhelmed by the generosity of this community."

The St. Francois County Health Department conducted routine inspections at two local restaurants on Oct. 4 in an attempt to identify where the strain of E. coli originated that infected the 2-year-old Bonne Terre girl. Officials said no direct links were made to the origin of the strain of E. coli 0157:H7.

In addition to inspecting the food establishments, a water sample out of the private well at the residence of the Allens was also tested. The water sample also came back negative.

According to a fact sheet released by the county health department, anyone can become infected with E. coli 0157:H7, but children and the elderly are more likely to develop serious complications. The illness is acquired by ingesting food or water that contains the bacteria.

The bacteria can be found in the intestines of some cattle and contamination of the meat can occur during the slaughtering process. Eating meat that is rare or inadequately cooked is a common way of getting the infection. Infection can also occur by contaminating surfaces or utensils with raw meat and then preparing uncooked food on those surfaces without washing them.

Vegetables, fruits and unpasteurized fruit juices can also be contaminated. Petting or handling animals that are infected without washing hands immediately is another way the infection can be transmitted. Person-to-person transmission can also occur if infected people do not wash their hands after using the toilet.

Symptoms can include severe diarrhea and abdominal cramps. Blood is often seen in the stool. Fever may or may not be present. Symptoms usually appear three days after exposure, but may be as short as one day or as long as nine days.

A benefit account for Emilie is still open at First State Community Bank locations.