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Twin Cities man says blood donors saved his life

The last thing Matt Deyo expected during his senior year at Burnsville High School was to be bald for prom and graduation. But in December of 1999 he was diagnosed with bone cancer.

He says his doctor, "…actually found it because I was having some kind of sharp pain… just below my right knee."

So to treat his bone cancer, Deyo had 10 months of chemotherapy which lowers the blood's ability to clot. It can cause internal bleeding. In Deyo's case, it caused nose bleeds. The worst of them lasted for six hours and the nurse treating him feared the worst.

He says, "I was just about ready to pass out by that time. But she was shouting down the hallway that if the blood didn't get here, I was going to be dead in my bed."

Luckily Deyo got the blood he needed. He says, "Over the course of a month and a half, I ended up having about 15 transfusions."

Now, 9 years later, Deyo is a cancer survivor. And he's working at the University of Minnesota with other cancer patients who are enrolled in research. He's the community health coordinator for the Department of Pediatrics Division of Hematology, Oncology and Blood and Marrow Transplantation. Part of his job today was to bring blood samples from patients to the lab for testing.

Some of the patients Deyo works with need many more blood transfusions than he ever did because they have cancers of the blood.

So Deyo encourages others to donate blood because without it, treatment for his patients wouldn't be possible. He says, "It's absolutely crucial to the treatment of cancer. It's absolutely the reason I'm sitting here today."

If you would like to donate blood, you can call the Red Cross at 1-800-GIVE-LIFE or log onto the link above.

By Renee Tessman, KARE 11 News

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