

TheDenverChannel.com

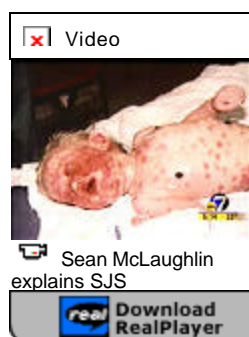
Girl's Adverse Reaction To Allergies Leaves Her Blind

Mother Creates Foundation For Stevens Johnson Syndrome Sufferers

POSTED: 3:30 p.m. MST February 26, 2003

UPDATED: 9:02 a.m. MST February 27, 2003

WESTMINSTER, Colo. -- A young girl in Westminster is half-blind, dealing with a devastating syndrome that could hit any one of us at any time.



The syndrome is simply a severe reaction to almost any over-the-counter medication but its effects are horrific and sometimes deadly.

Julie McCawley is a fourth-grader and reigning family champ at the board game "Life." She wears dark glasses because of something that happened to her when she was 11 months old, something that nearly ended her life.

"I remember getting those blisters in my mouth and the pain of the blisters," Julie said.

She had a rare, severely adverse reaction to medicine. Stevens Johnson syndrome, or SJS, can happen to anyone and with any medicine.

"SJS patients are treated like burn patients because they literally burn from the inside out," said Julie's mother, Jean McCawley.

Doctors had initially diagnosed Julie with chicken pox because of the skin rash symptoms.

"They put her on the phenobarbatol and two weeks later her eyes swelled shut and she started to develop blisters all over her body," Jean said.

Doctors finally diagnosed her with SJS and the rash disappeared. But not before complications left Julie blind in the right eye and with very little vision in the left.

"I have to wear my sunglasses because the light hits my eyes and I have photo ... phobia," Julie said.

Julie gets by with some sisterly love.

"One of my favorite things in the whole entire world is my sister," Julie said.

But her mom worries about the future.

"Even to put blush on as a teenager ... with the excessive tearing it's not going to stay. And mascara -- she has no lashes," Jean said.

To help cope, Jean started the SJS foundation to spread the word about SJS and offer support to others.

"No one deserves to have this. No one should have to suffer from this," Jean said.

Julie's heading to Boston in late March for special lenses that will help with the constant tearing up of her eyes and the sensitivity to light.

More Information

- [Learn More about the SJS Foundation](#)

Copyright 2003 by [TheDenverChannel.com](#). All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.