



Fiance Lance Schmaedler stands by Sara Immel's bed during her time in the hospital. Submitted photo.



Sara Immel sits with her dad in the hospital during her first bout with spinal meningitis. Submitted photo.

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world were praying for her," Mary Immel said, telling her daughter that people knew she was sick.

Sara remained at Froedert until Wednesday, Aug. 13, and was sent home with a week's worth of IV antibiotics that her mother learned to administer. After resting for that week, Sara returned to work a Friday shift at Sweet Basil, the restaurant operated by her aunt and uncle in Plymouth. "That's in her blood, you don't call in sick," said Mary, citing the family work ethic and history of farming and self-employment.

And the next day, Sara ran a 5K race.

She intended to walk, along with other family members. She wanted to be at the colon cancer awareness event in Madison to honor a Sweet Basil restaurant patron.

"But, my body wouldn't let me walk," Sara Immel said, although she wasn't at her usual pace. "I really went thinking I would walk. But, I saw people pass me and I couldn't do it."

On Aug. 30, she joined her family for their annual participation in the Dobogai Memorial Run in Fond du Lac. Again, she planned to walk the 5K. Again, she ran. She enjoys running, which she began at Campellsport High School, and she felt good.

But on Labor Day, Sara Immel had to admit she was not well. Body aches and chills could be the flu, but she wasn't going to take a chance. She headed back to the St. Agnes ER.

There, Dr. Peter McCool administered IV antibiotics and performed a spinal tap, to be safe.

"There was so much scar tissue, the needle bent," Mary Immel said.

The antibiotics and medical attention prevented Sara Immel from getting meningitis a third time. The hospital kept Sara overnight, and an MRI the next day showed infected fluid behind the ear, despite the temporary plugs blocking the hole in the bone. Sara Immel was put in an ambulance and returned to Froedert. The infection needed to be brought back under control before surgery, so Immel was sent home with medication to eliminate the infection and prepare her for surgery in October.

What did Immel do a week after this second trip to Froedert? She ran another 5K.

"I had a remarkable time," she said, noting the doctor cleared her to run as much as she wants, as the exercise won't worsen her condition. She is training for the Disney Princess half marathon at Disney World in February. And, she is preparing for her wedding in Jamaica in January 2016.

"We're so glad she's back," Mary Immel said. "It was tough and go for awhile. She had no idea....It's good she was out of it and doesn't remember."

"I feel back to my normal self," said Sara, whose glowing skin and animated personality radiate health. "I felt like I was on vacation or away for awhile, because I was out of it. I just think, through this all, God really has a purpose for me."