**Melbourne family determined to raise $350,000**

**to save baby daughter**

*19/9/2018*

**A Melbourne family is desperately raising money for their toddler to receive life-saving treatment to help her live past the age of five.**

Ava Wake had just turned two when her parents Leanne and James noticed something was wrong. Their happy, sunny little girl suddenly stopped sleeping, playing, or walking, and became inconsolable.

On April 5, James and Leanne, who was pregnant with their second child at the time, took their daughter to the Royal Children’s Hospital in Melbourne for a full-body MRI.

“On the morning of the 7th we came into the room, and there were six doctors. As soon as I saw them, I knew it wasn’t good. They told us they had found tumours,” Leanne said.

After multiple medical appointments, they received the blow of their lives: little Ava is fighting Stage 4 High Risk Neuroblastoma, a very aggressive form of cancer with a terrifying prognosis and high rates of relapse.

They were shocked to learn that her best chance for survival is a new trial treatment only available at Memorial Sloan Kettering Hospital in New York City, which (along with associated costs) is estimated at a daunting $350,000.

Despite amazing results, the vaccine is currently not receiving funding, leaving [family and friends to come up with the money necessary for treatment](https://www.gofundme.com/jupcnf-avas-journey) as well as flights and accommodation for one year in America.

The still-smiling toddler is in the middle of her seventh round of chemotherapy and has already endured multiple extremely invasive surgeries, including having her ovaries harvested, stem cells harvested, and seven blood and platelet transfusions. She is in hospital three weeks a month, and the journey to recovery includes two years of ongoing treatments.

Her baby brother Angus was born on Monday, 17 September.

Ava is expected to be in remission mid next year, and the family of four will have a small window then to head to New York to start treatment, before the risk of relapse increases.

The vaccine will hopefully stop Ava from relapsing, which happens in about 75 per cent of people who have her certain type of cancer.

But her parents say they will do whatever it takes to help her get well.

James and Leanne, who was working full-time up until having her second baby, have set up a [GoFundMe fundraising page](https://www.gofundme.com/jupcnf-avas-journey) to get their little girl the treatment she needs.

“Every time we see that someone we don’t know has donated to [Ava’s GoFundMe](https://www.gofundme.com/jupcnf-avas-journey), we are just overwhelmed with gratitude. Every little bit means so much,” said Ava’s dad James, who has left his job to be Ava’s full-time carer as well as a stay-at-home dad to his new baby son.

“I have pushed myself very hard to provide for my family, and it is difficult to accept that we just can’t do this on our own. I do not take it lightly asking for money, but it is Ava’s only hope,” said Leanne.

Friends and volunteers are rallying to the cause, but the family is still well short of their goal. A [website](https://www.avasjourney.com.au/) and [facebook page called Ava’s Journey](https://www.facebook.com/Avasneuroblastomajourney/) have been set up to provide updates on Ava’s progress.

Ava’s volunteer fundraising committee is hosting a black-tie Gala Event, to be held in Melbourne in November. All proceeds will go toward funding Ava’s treatment.

“I have never seen a community come together so willingly and quickly, to offer up so many talents. We have been overwhelmed with the support for our Ava and just hope we get a really good turn out so we can get this treatment for our little girl,” says James.

“You think, how do you cope, but you just have to do whatever it takes. As a parent you will do anything for your child. We are determined to stay positive and we will do whatever it takes to save our baby girl.”

**To donate, attend events, or hear more about Ava, please visit:**

[**https://www.avasjourney.com.au/**](https://www.avasjourney.com.au/)