It's a disease so rare that only one in a million is affected by it, and some say a stem cell transplant could be the cure.

It's been proven to work for a couple of women in Canada.

Now, Jaime Polhemus from Princeton, Illinois woman is one of the first few people to undergo the procedure. The active mother's life was changed when she was diagnosed with Stiff Person Syndrome or SPS, an autoimmune disease so rare only one person in a million is affected by it.

The disease has drastically changed her life.

"It is hard because

you go almost

through, like, a

grieving process of

what your life used

to be like, and then

what it is. And you

just, you have to

accept it," said

Jaime.

The disease causes

her muscles to

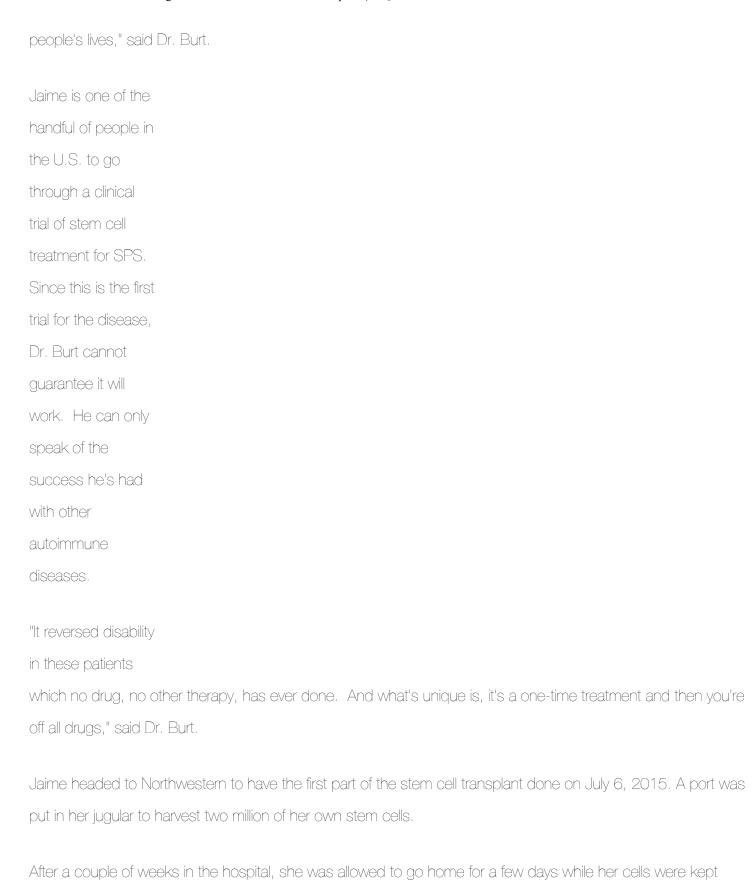
stiffen and lock up.

The spasms at

strong and out of

her control.

How an Illinois woman's life-altering disease led her to a stem cell transplant   WQAD.com
"Just having the
kids hug you, or make extra noise in the background" can bring on the debilitating spasms, Jamie said. "Taking a
shower can flare the spasms. Being in public is really difficult, because there's so many unexpected noises."
After taking several medications, and enduring weekly trips to the hospital for treatment, Jaime says she had run
out of hope.
"What else do we do?"
Then she and her husband found Dr. Richard Burt at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago. He was the
country's leader for stem cell transplant for autoimmune diseases. He's treated more than 23 different
autoimmune diseases for the last 26 years.
"We are getting results that no one else has seen with conventional therapy, and it is having a big impact on



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"The first day was kind of rough and I was pretty sick afterwards; but, then you just think, okay. You just keep

preserved in a freezer.

counting down the days," Jaime said.

When she returned to Northwestern, Jaime's diseased immune system was destroyed with chemo. Her stem cells are inserted back into her body, to rebuild a healthier immune system.

"Each day I've been getting stronger," said Jaime.

Back at home, Jaime

has cut back on her

medications and no

longer makes weekly

trips to Perry Memorial

for treatments.

"I still had some

spasm flares, but

they've been much

more controlled. I can

take prescription

medicine which, in the

past, wouldn't alleviate

them."

Now it's a waiting game for Jaime to see if the transplant worked.

"Overall, I think it's heading in the right direction. It's just going to take some time," said Jaime.

A healthier Jaime wants to help others, and encourage people to take chances even when the odds are against them.