

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 are strong and out of her control.

"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

people's lives," said Dr. Burt.

Jaime is one of the handful of people in the U.S. to go through a clinical trial of stem cell treatment for SPS.

Since this is the first trial for the disease, Dr. Burt cannot guarantee it will work. He can only speak of the success he's had with other autoimmune diseases.

"It reversed disability in these patients

which no drug, no other therapy, has ever done. And what's unique is, it's a one-time treatment and then you're off all drugs," said Dr. Burt.

Jaime headed to Northwestern to have the first part of the stem cell transplant done on July 6, 2015. A port was put in her jugular to harvest two million of her own stem cells.

After a couple of weeks in the hospital, she was allowed to go home for a few days while her cells were kept preserved in a freezer.

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

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.