



Patient youngster: Rory Gardiner is getting used to spending time at Starship Children's Hospital.

Get well Rory

By Rose Stirling

TWO BRAIN tumours have landed Dargaville boy Rory Gardiner in Starship Children's Hospital.

Rory's mother Leigh Honnor says the "cheeky" seven-year-old has been "patient and tolerant" even though he has had scans, intravenous lines, a drug regime, surgery, and tests to save his life.

The Dargaville Primary School pupil was a healthy and active boy until February when he suffered severe headaches, later found to be caused by the tumours.

Ms Honnor has had to leave her job at the Whangarei District Council to care for Rory while partner Sean Gardiner continues to work and care for the couple's eldest son Sam, 9.

She says an experience like this teaches you many things.

"I think children are amazingly flexible. Rory's largely accepted that this is what he has to do and he is incredibly brave."

But she says he can't wait to come home and see his friends.

One of his best buddies Kody Johnston says he can't wait to see Rory well again.

"School holidays would be more fun with Rory here," he says.

Another friend Korie Morrison says he misses playing with him at school and hopes to visit him soon.

Leigh says when her son started getting headaches "the paediatrician told me he didn't think it was anything serious, just migraines but my gut instinct told me that something wasn't right".

"He was getting headaches so severe that he would vomit and normal pain relief just wasn't working, then one evening in March I took him to the Dargaville Medical Centre, where he was referred to Whangarei Hospital.

"The doctors there did some tests which came back fine so I thought I was being paranoid."

She says one doctor decided to do a CT scan as well just to be sure.

"Rory came right Monday and Tuesday, so we thought perhaps we had just over-reacted."

But the scan revealed Rory had two tumours.

"For a split second we thought it was a joke but then we were shaking and crying."

After receiving the news, the couple say they soon found they had to try to get on with life.

"I had to go home and get Sam from school and quickly collect clothes and bits and pieces for myself and Rory. You don't have time to grieve, you just have to deal with all this other stuff."

Rory was classed as high risk because the tumours were putting pressure on his brain. So surgery was planned for three days after diagnosis to remove one tumour, and a large part of the second was removed days later.

When Rory's condition stabilises, he should be able to go home for a short time.

It is expected that Rory will continue to undergo further treatment during the next nine months.

Visit Rory's website at www.rorygardiner.co.nz to leave messages of support and donations.