

## **The Spurrell Family Part 9: Mark**

On Tuesday mornings Wavey and young Mark (now age three) enjoyed going to the Little Dolphins Swimming Club for lessons. There were many other young mothers (and a few fathers) there with their young toddlers. It was a social event for the parents. Following the swimming lessons they often went to the local coffee shop to chat and shared notes on parenting and the woes of raising children. Mark, despite his early age, showed no fear of the water.

On Thursday evening around 5 p.m. Mark became unwell, fussy and irritable. He did not want to eat his supper. Wavey checked his temperature and it was 38.5 C. She took off his sweater and tried to settle him by reading him his favourite bedtime story and rocked him in their rocking chair. Alan arrived home late from work around 7 p.m. and Mark had still not settled, in fact he seemed worse. He was rubbing his ear and cried when his head was moved. Wavey called the Nurse Line and it was recommended they take him to the local Emergency Room (ER) for assessment. Wavey became upset and Alan tried to console her, "It is probably just an ear infection. Kids get them all the time."

Upon arrival, the ER physician assessed Mark and found the following: Temperature 38.7, Mark's neck was stiff, he cried when his head was moved, he had no rash or bruising, and the left ear drum was inflamed. While the physician was conducting the examination Mark vomited and became very agitated. Meningitis was suspected. Some tests were taken immediately and treatment options were evaluated.

In private, the nurse spoke with the physician in the hallway, "Doctor, yesterday we had another child come in with the same presenting symptoms. CSF fluid analysis showed the child had bacterial meningitis. He is in ICU being treated."