

Although Aryonna Muhammad is only 13 years old, she has been hospitalized more than 40 times. She misses at least two weeks of school each year, and much greatly limit her physical activity. Aryonna has sickle cell anemia, a systemic disease that doesn't allow her to have the normal life of a teen-ager.

One way to control Aryonna's debilitating disease is by giving her transfusions of healthy blood to replace the sickle-shaped red blood cells that have such damaging effects on her body. The middle school student must receive about four transfusions every year, which bring her instant relief from the pain she feels in her head, back, stomach and other parts of her body.

There are many activities that Aryonna's mother is afraid to let her do, like playing on sports teams. Without blood transfusions, her life would be limited even more. "The blood is a gift of life for Aryonna," says Mrs. Jackson, Aryonna's mom. "Giving blood is the most unselfish thing a person can do."



