

TEEN BEATS CANCER, ACES ENGINEERING EXAM

Ten months after 19-year-old Ashwini Prasad was diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma, the student of Lonavala's Sinhgad Institute of Technology has not only overcome several rounds of chemotherapy, but also managed to secure 55 per cent in her second-year exams. The best news? Docs say she is cured



Even while she was diagnosed with stage-II Hodgkin's Lymphoma, Ashwini Prasad was determined to appear for her second-year engineering exams in May

THE SUNSHINE STORY

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FOR 19-year-old Ashwini Prasad, life turned upside down when doctors informed her last October that she had stage-II Hodgkin's Lymphoma — a cancer of lymph tissues found in the chest, spleen and liver lymph nodes. But after initially going into shock, the gritty girl fought back. Prasad, who lives in Powai with her parents, sat for her second-year engineering exams all through May while enduring painful chemotherapy sessions.

They say fortune favours the brave and in case of Prasad, it genuinely did. Last week, the exam results showed she has scored 55 per cent in her second tests. Ashwini says her big chal-

lenge was to convince the doctors and her parents to allow her to sit for the exams.

Recalling the sequence of events, Prasad says she was diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma when she consulted a doctor after experiencing high fever, weight loss and extreme weakness. "It came as a shock when I was diagnosed with cancer. The toughest part was to deal with hair and weight loss which I feared would jeopardise my studies," she told SUNDAY MID DAY.

Then, her fightback began. "I underwent intensive chemotherapy for the next six months due to which I missed four months of college and eventually my practical exams," she recalls.

However, the illness did not deter her. So when her college informed her that

they would allow her to sit for the third and fourth semester exams together in May as a special case, she grabbed the opportunity. "My family and doctors were worried but supportive of my decision. I studied in the hospital while undergoing chemotherapy," says Ashwini. However, preparing for two semesters at one go was not her only challenge.

As her college is in Lonavala she was forced to make daily trips to the city for her radiation sessions, in between exams. Prasad says her day would start at six am when she would wake up to prepare for her exams that started from 10 am. And soon after exams got over at one pm, she took the college bus to Powai's Hiranandani hospital where she was undergoing treatment.

"It would take me two hours to reach the city after my exams and my sessions would last for another two hours," said Ashwini. The engineering student made it a point to study for at least six hours a day to catch up on all the lost time while she was

admitted in the hospital.

To make matters worse, she was admitted to the hospital for four days just before her exams due to a severe chest infection. "Though I was weak, I caught up with some much needed rest during the three days break I had in between each exam," she added.

Ashwini's efforts and determination paid off when her results were finally declared on July 27. She secured 55 per cent in her second year and has now resumed her studies full time after recovering fully.

Speaking to SUNDAY MID DAY, Dr Ashish Bakshi, consultant medical oncologist at the hospital said, "She had a big tumour on her chest lymph nodes, which was treated first through chemotherapy and then radiation. Though she was responding very well to the treatment, it was challenging for Prasad to concentrate on her studies."

Dr Bakshi added there is a complete remission of the cancer.