

# Stomach bugs cure toddler

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DARCEY Langshaw had spent more than half his life in hospital before he had exhausted all conventional treatment for his chronic gut and immune problems.

Until four months ago, the two-year-old had lived a miserable existence, battling constant stomach pains, recurrent infections of diseases he had been vaccinated against, and crippling food intolerances.

But after Royal Children's Hospital doctors lobbied the ethics board to try a radical procedure – an intestinal microbial transplantation – they successfully recalibrated the bacterial balance in the toddler's gut to cure his persistent bacterial infection.

It may possibly have also cured his food intolerances.

This Australian-first procedure, in which his father Ben's stool was transplanted into Darcey's gut through a colonoscopy, is soon to be trialled to prevent allergenic disease and food intolerances in the first year of life.

Mum Simone said it was during one of Darcey's many hospital admissions in his first year of life for respiratory infections, measles and rotavirus that he caught the bacterial infection *clostridium difficile*.

Antibiotics usually cure 90 per cent of cases, but nothing worked for Darcey.

RCH paediatric gastroenterologist and allergist Professor Katie Allen had already been treating Darcey for his food intolerances, when she devised a plan to treat him using donated gut microbes, following successful use in adults with the condition.

Prof Allen will start a clinical trial testing whether this can be replicated in other children.

"His diet and bowel movements are pretty much back to normal," Prof Allen said.

Darcey's parents say he is now enjoying the joys of childhood for the first time, such playing with friends and attending parties.

"We've seen a whole new child," Mrs Langshaw said.