

## Joseph's Story

When he heard his wife screaming at the back of the house, instinct overtook Brendan English. For a full terrifying minute prior to that, the couple had searched their western Sydney home for any sign of their 15 month old son, Joseph, after discovering he wasn't with any of his older brothers.



Sonia English found the toddler floating face down in the spa. By that stage, his little body was sodden, lifeless and beginning to turn blue. What happened next would effectively save Joseph's life, but Mr English has no memory of what was running through his mind as he started CPR on his son. "I wasn't thinking about anything. It was just a case of 'just do it,' he said yesterday.

While Mr English might struggle to put his actions into words, CareFlight staff, who were on the scene moments later, yesterday praised his training and putting that training into action. The refrigerator mechanic was taught basic life support at high school, but never had to use it until his son's near drowning on April 10 at their Holsworthy home.

Yesterday Dr Shane Trevithick, who was part of the CareFlight team that treated Joseph at the scene, said his prognosis initially looked grim. "He did have a heartbeat, but he was what we call neurologically unresponsive, so he was really unconscious and just moving his arms in response to pain, which can be a bad sign." he said.

The fact that Joseph has since made a full recovery emphasised the importance of parents learning basic lifesaving techniques to ensure they could assist in an emergency, Dr Trevithick said.

"This child has done really, really well - far better than you would expect - because of those two things: The initial resuscitation for a couple of minutes and then our advanced intervention with the anaesthetic and the doctor paramedic team," he said. "The combination has made a world of difference to him."

Australian research released earlier this week supports the doctor's argument. Along with a team of experts, Dr Gary Browne from the Children's Hospital at Westmead studied an 11-day period in January 2007 in which eight children were involved in drownings or near-drownings.

Four children received basic life support within five minutes of immersion and survived with good clinical outcomes. The other four were not discovered for five minutes or more and all died, with only one receiving basic life support prior to death. In Joseph English's case, his mother said there were five minutes the family could not account for him on the day he fell into the spa. She believes CPR should be made a compulsory part of parenting classes to ensure other possible tragedies are

prevented. "As limp and blue as Joseph was, we didn't hesitate to perform CPR and that's what they were saying at the hospital - that a lot of parents think it's too late so they don't do anything." she said. "He was in intensive care for six days on a ventilator, but once he was released from there, it was straight home. He's been awesome since then - he's really, really good."

Michelle Cazzulino

The Daily Telegraph, 25<sup>th</sup> April 2008