

# Finding Purpose Through Pain

**A devastating diagnosis inspires an extraordinary partnership.**

A baby changes everything. When Hudson was born, he forever altered his parents' world with sleepless nights, toothless grins and boundless love. Three months later, Lexi and Nate Solder's world turned upside down again. Their infant son was diagnosed with a rare kidney cancer.

At the time, Nate—a cancer survivor himself—was an offensive tackle for the New England Patriots. He called his agent from Boston Children's to ask where they should go to ensure Hudson got the best care. His agent told them they were already there.

With only 25 bilateral pediatric kidney tumor diagnoses per year in the United States, Hudson's condition was rare. He had multiple tumors on both kidneys, putting him in an even smaller group.

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**LEXI SOLDER**

A team of experts, including pediatric oncologist **Elizabeth Mullen, MD**, and Department of Surgery Chief Emeritus **Robert Shamberger, MD**, developed a comprehensive game plan for Hudson's care. His treatment combined chemotherapy and surgery with a focus on preserving, rather than removing, his kidneys. "I truly feel like Hudson wouldn't be here without their care and expertise," shares Lexi.

Two years later, when Nate accepted a position with the New York Giants, continuing Hudson's care at Boston Children's was an essential stipulation of the move. Now, Hudson's Boston team at the Dana-Farber/Boston Children's Cancer and Blood Disorders Center directs his treatment in collaboration with experts at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center.

The personal relationships forged through Hudson's diagnosis have been transformational for the Solders. In 2019, when Hudson needed a major kidney surgery, Dr. Shamberger insisted on scrubbing in for the procedure despite being semi-retired. "He's been a light in this whole situation," says Lexi. The Solders recognized Dr. Shamberger's compassion and legacy of innovation by supporting a Harvard Medical School professorship in his honor.



Hudson completed another round of chemotherapy in May 2020, and since then, his checkups have been promising. "It's a delight to see him growing up and really thriving—despite everything he's going through," says Dr. Mullen.

"Over time, our appreciation grows even more," says Lexi. The couple has channeled their gratitude into a host of philanthropic efforts. They shared their story with their networks, friends and family with the aim of increasing support for pediatric cancer research. Lexi recently joined Boston Children's Philanthropic Board of Advisors, a group of donors advancing the hospital's mission as ambassadors and volunteers, and she has hosted webinars with hospital experts to introduce others from around the country to the Boston Children's community.

In spite of the uncertainty given Hudson's diagnosis, the Solders take comfort in the extraordinary progress of the science over the last six-and-a-half years. From the number of genes assessed in genetic testing to the ability to detect certain cancers with a urine sample, the Solders are amazed at the pace of innovation.

Since Hudson's case is so rare, the family takes advantage of any opportunity to join clinical trials at the hospital. "Participating in research studies certainly makes it feel like there's a purpose to what Hudson's going through—if we can be a very, very small part of any discovery, we're all for it," says Lexi. The family's enthusiastic commitment to pediatric research and philanthropic engagement reflects their hope for a new world—one that's free from childhood cancer.