

Seriously ill girl (10) to travel to US for surgery

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A YOUNG Co Wexford girl left with serious mobility problems after she was struck with a viral infection four years ago will travel to New York next week in the hope that doctors there can perform surgery to help her recovery.

Ten-year-old Nicole Cahill from Marshalstown, near Enniscorthy, became ill with the infection in October 2004.

She was taken to Wexford General Hospital and later to Children's University Hospital, Temple Street, where she spent 24 days in a coma.



Swelling in her brain resulted in a stroke. Nicole developed a condition known as acute disseminating encephalitis (ADEM), a serious inflammation of the brain that can occur following a viral infection and which causes nerve damage.

When she emerged from the coma she was left with serious disabilities, her mother Maireád said yesterday.

"She couldn't do anything. Her mouth was left open, she couldn't swallow, she couldn't talk. She couldn't move." Nicole spent eight months at the National Rehabilitation Centre in Dún Laoghaire, having physiotherapy and injections to help aid her recovery.

Ms Cahill will travel with her next Tuesday to New York, where Nicole will have tests at Beth Israel medical centre in Manhattan.

The family believes the tests, and any subsequent treatment or surgery, will cost at least €300,000 and they have launched a public appeal for funding.

A consultant at Beth Israel is currently examining her case, Ms Cahill said.

"I've told him straight out that unless he's 100 per cent sure he can do something for her, there's no way I'm putting her through any more torture," she said.

Consultant neurologists who spoke to The Irish Times yesterday believed doctors might be considering a type of deep-brain stimulation technique to improve Nicole's movement.