

MY JOURNEY WITH HASHIMOTO'S



I was 12 years old when my mom took me to the doctor and said, 'I don't really know what's going on, but I think she's depressed.' I was shocked to hear her say that, but deep down I knew she was right. I sat in the examination room and cried while they discussed the possibilities of why a 12 year old girl was so out of sorts.

I took the time to reflect on where my health may have taken a turn.

Was it when I started to need a blanket to sit outside in the dead of summer or when it started hurting just getting out of bed? I never put much thought into why I felt sad when my life was so good or why I continued to gain weight when I tried so hard to be healthy. I felt like I was in a daze all of the time, like I wasn't a part of my own life. Not present. Not fully there. Everyday tasks became increasingly difficult. I continued to have difficulties in school and I couldn't concentrate on anything in front of me. I spent the majority of my time rereading questions over and over again yet nothing was getting absorbed. Most of my nights were spent having extremely hot baths because it was the only way to warm my body back. I was often so cold that it would hurt me to the core and there was nothing to help. I remember a time when I was in the bathtub trying to get my body temperature to a normal range. I was in there for hours, up to my neck in scorching hot water, just too afraid to get out because of the chills that would creep in after. I was too weak and exhausted and the only thing I could do was lie there submerged. The next thing I knew my mom was picking me up out of the tub. Perhaps that is the moment my mom started questioning my health.

As I snapped back to reality, my doctor was filling out a requisition for blood work. A full panel focusing on my thyroid levels. At this point in my life, it wasn't often that I would need to get blood work done. Little did I know this would be a very common occurrence in my life. A few days went by and my doctor called with my results. I was suffering with Hashimoto's thyroiditis (the autoimmune form of hypothyroidism.)

This diagnosis scared me. I didn't know anything about the thyroid or how important of an organ it was nor did I realise how greatly an underactive thyroid could affect your overall health.

I was prescribed levothyroxine and was told I would have to take it for the rest of my life. One tiny pill for the rest of my life. The task seemed easy enough, but I was young and ignorant to the annoyance that would come from it – remembering my pill bottle when I slept over at a friend's house or remembering to take it at the same time everyday. I hardly remembered my homework, let alone a pill.

As a young girl, I didn't spend too much time thinking about it. I didn't educate myself on the thyroid or any triggers that could worsen it. I didn't acknowledge the long term affects.

As life went on, continuing to take my medication, I got married in my 20's and decided to start a family. It didn't take long to realise that becoming pregnant would not be an easy feat for me. Three pregnancies ended in miscarriage and with that came mental health struggles. After tweaking my thyroid medication and receiving a progesterone supplement I became pregnant. After two successful pregnancies that went to full term, I realised how important it was to educate myself on my condition as it really could affect all aspects of my life.

Over the past few years I have really got to know my body. I know what works and what doesn't with diet and exercise. I've tried intense boot camps and yoga, elimination diets, carb cutting and everything in between. The result - I do what works for me and what feels best for my body. In my case, it's spinning, following a gluten free and sugar free diet, little caffeine consumption and having calm environment with minimal stress, just to name a few.

Everyone's experience with their thyroid condition is different and unique. You must find what works best for you in order to live a happy and healthy life.

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