

Read Carly's story of life with Crohn's disease.



I was around 15 years old when I first started to need the toilet urgently, numerous times a day. On one particular day I had gone to my Nans for lunch and had already been over 10 times. We had to cancel lunch and I spent that whole day and the following day drifting between sleeping and going to the toilet. It was then I discovered that my Nan in fact had IBD (Ulcerative Colitis) herself. Hers was so severe, she had needed an ileostomy bag.

Since then, my aunt and uncle have both been diagnosed with Ulcerative colitis. She advised me to go to the Dr's. When I did go to my Dr's and explained my urgency at needing the toilet, along with severe stomach pains and tiredness, I was told with my age and doing exams and the stresses I was going through, my symptoms all lead to IBS.

I continued with having bouts of being ok for a while, then having issues. I didn't want to appear to be a hypochondriac so I got on with things, letting friends and family down at short notice if I wasn't feeling well, losing lots of weight when I was feeling poorly.

When I was 27, I noticed I was producing a lot more mucus when I went to the toilet and occasionally had blood. My stomach was constantly bloated and I was getting asked quite regularly if I was pregnant (I wasn't). I had extreme tiredness and was getting regular fevers and had absolutely no appetite. This time however, my stomach was alternating from needing the toilet frequently to being seriously constipated. (I don't know which is the less of two evils).

I went back to my GP and saw a new Doctor. I explained my family history, my symptoms and was referred for a colonoscopy. Fortunately, as I had family who had been through this, although I was nervous, I knew what to expect. I almost gave up at the prep drink though - it was utterly vile (fortunately for my second prep drink I had read some handy tips from some support groups to

make it a little more bearable). I wasn't aware of the colonoscopy itself due to sedation, but when I come around in recovery, I was informed that my bowel had some patchy areas with ulcers which the Doctor thought to be Crohn's. They stated they had taken some biopsies and I would be getting an appointment to see the consultant.

I started on a course of steroids alongside calcium tablets. I put on a massive deal of weight on these. I was later informed I had mild to moderate Crohn's disease.

As my family had history of Ulcerative Colitis, I joined some groups to find out more about Crohn's. I was given a 'can't wait' card and a radar key informing me that I am welcome to use disabled toilets.

However, my experience of using disabled toilets when needed haven't been very positive. I was extremely poorly one day and rushed to the toilet (I usually use 'normal' toilets when I am feeling fit and well). I simply couldn't wait in the queue so used my radar key.

When I left, an angry looking woman with her baby screamed at me in front of a group of people, that I had no right using the toilet and should be ashamed of myself. I walked away in tears.

I ended up in hospital for 6 days after this due to a bowel blockage. I started vomiting excrement and had severe pain. Again, I ended up on another course of steroids, alongside special drinks, and very strong painkillers.

I work part-time and have had 4 hospital stays in the 2 years that I have worked for them. Fortunately, I am very lucky that they are very supportive and have put provisions in place for days that I am feeling poorly.

It is very hard on my two children. My son who is almost 8 years old tries to take a caring role for me when I am poorly which I really don't want or expect him to do - he should be a child, not worrying that his mum is crying in pain, being sick and can't leave the bathroom.

At the moment, I am taking one type of medication and take pain killers when needed. I still get a very bloated stomach which can be quite embarrassing so I have to dress in loose clothing and wear scarfs to try and hide it. I get tired quite a lot so will often sleep on my days off when my children are at school.

I'm currently having more tests as my consultant is unsure if I have other issues with my health.

I first heard of Happy Flush on a support group. It can feel quite embarrassing if you leave a nasty smell in the toilets and it always made me feel quite anxious. I purchased some and it takes away some of the anxiety that the person who uses the toilet after you, won't be hit by a foul smell. It's one less thing to worry about.

Information about Happy Flush.

Happy Flush is a before you go air freshener which is made in the UK by a family business. It is designed to trap odours below the surface and make using the toilet a better experience for everyone. It contains natural essential and fragrance oils and comes in a variety of powerful fragrances. For more information go to www.happyflush.com

