

Nicola's story: Living with guttate psoriasis

Meet Nicola, a 23-year-old from Manchester, England. Nicola lives with guttate psoriasis, a skin condition that forms teardrop-shaped red spots on the skin.

Interviewed by Christine Janus



Please tell us about yourself and where you live.

I'm a graduate in English literature and drama. I am originally from England but moved to Toronto last summer. I love reading; I also enjoy cooking (and eating!), and I have a passion for travelling. I was diagnosed with guttate psoriasis when I was 11 years old.

How does psoriasis influence your daily living and your family's?

There are days when I feel my skin condition controls my life, especially when I am choosing clothes or recreational activities. This definitely impacts my family's life too, often leaving them feeling helpless.

Does your condition affect your personal relationships?

I feel blessed that my boyfriend, family and friends are so supportive. With others, I have learned that it is best to speak out about my psoriasis. Keeping it hidden only results in awkwardly dodging questions and appearing anti-social.

Tell us about the education and support you have received on effective management.

Until I became aware of the Canadian Association of Psoriasis Patients and the CSPA, there wasn't much. I felt alone. For years, my GP would simply prescribe a steroid

cream and that was that. Furthermore, there was no psychological support. I now have access to a network of other psoriasis patients and medical experts; it makes a huge difference.

How do you manage your condition?

I have a healthy lifestyle. My diet consists of eating lots of fish and vegetables, and drinking plenty of water. I take omega-3 supplements. I moisturize everyday. I've also started a new treatment recommended by my dermatologist.

Has psoriasis ever gotten in the way of doing what you wanted?

Psoriasis has restricted my work; many uniforms in restaurants/bars and even shops are quite revealing. All I envision is exposed psoriasis.

Have you ever been on the receiving end of stares?

I often cover up my affected areas. Some people ask what it is, which I don't mind, but if a person makes a statement as opposed to a question, it becomes uncomfortable. For example, I have been told, 'Wow, you have a lot of mosquito bites!' I am gradually getting more confident in explaining what it is, but I still have a long way to go. This isn't due to embarrassment, but to

ignorance from the general public in pitying skin patients or even fearing that they are contagious.

What would you like people to know about being a psoriasis patient?

People don't realize that plaque itches constantly, and often cracks and bleeds. Also, psoriasis patients are at an elevated risk of cardiovascular disease, and three in 10 patients develop psoriatic arthritis. I want to stress the psychological battle; we dread the arrival of summer, we fear social situations, and most of all we battle with our own acceptance of the disease. Having psoriasis is painful inside and out. I suffered in silence for years but I am now determined not to let it define who I am. I've taken control! 

Join us!

Canadian Association of Psoriasis Patients (CAPP) welcomes all psoriasis patients and their families. Meet other patients, learn tips and share your story. Visit our website: www.canadianpsoriasis.ca or our online community: www.skinergy.ca/psoriasis.