



## Natasha's Story

Hi my name is Natasha Rose Leggott, I have been battling with endometriosis for a long time but it was only 9 months ago that I was diagnosed and discovered the cause of my pain. I was always in a lot of pain each period since I was 13, (ten years ago) but since that age I always had contraception, I tried every contraception and had a horrible time with them all (I would bleed constantly) until I found the mirena, I had this for a year and had very little pain with periods, I then started to feel nauseous all of the time, at this point I was 19 so I had the mirena removed and the copper coil inserted, from here it was a huge downward spiral, pain wise! But the copper coil was so great in every other way that I just assumed the copper was the cause of the pain, I was told prior to having it inserted that the non-hormonal copper IUD causes heavier and more painful periods so I just dealt with it!

June last year my partner rushed me to hospital with suspected appendicitis. I was unable to walk properly and could hardly move. I underwent surgery that night and had my appendix removed and the surgeons then discovered the endometriosis. At least 50 medical appointments over the last year with GP's, and specialists just a little while ago I found myself in ED again and I was in excruciating, nauseating pain. I was given medication for pain, once the pain was under control I was told to consult my GP for strong pain relief to get me through the worst of the pain and see a gynecologist again as soon as possible to determine further treatment. Endometriosis is not classified as emergency surgery when it flares up.

A very short while ago I was called in for an emergency appointment with an endometriosis specialist who had seen my pictures from the surgery of the found endometriosis. I was then informed of the devastating news that I now have the end stages of endometriosis, stage four. My left ovary is filled with an endometrioma, my right has an 8x5cm cyst, chocolate cysts throughout my ovaries, and outside of my ovaries where a large cyst had ruptured, the only option I was told was to have surgery to excise the endometriosis. I made an emergency appointment with my GP who did a Pap smear and took some swabs to rule out any infection or cancerous cells, when these came back clear the go removed my copper IUD and with much difficult and a lot of force the gp managed to force the mirena through, I then had an ultrasound to check placement of the mirena and it took over an hour to get through and we wanted to check for perforation, the endometriosis was so severe this is why she struggled. The ultrasound determined soon after there was in fact clearly an amount of further spread endometriosis.

It is expected it has also spread to my bowel, if this is the case I will need bowel surgery. My surgery is booked for mid July 2016 but if one comes up sooner I will take that! I will have to change my diet for a week leading up to my surgery and take bowel prep also, In the surgery the surgeons will put a scope through my bowel to see if in fact the endometriosis has spread, they will open my urethra up with tubes to check for Adenomyosis, and manipulate my uterus and ovaries to excise the endometriosis, endometrioma and the chocolate cysts. After this I will start hormone replacement therapy and have my current mirena removed and a new one put in.

I am in a near constant amount of pain and if I want to get out of bed it takes strong pain relief and feelings of being so doped up I can barely focus so I can try and have a normal day! What's normal? I don't know what that feels like anymore! I was supposed to be graduating as a nurse in May this year (2016) but the endometriosis flared up so badly halfway through my final surgical prac that I had to stop! I now have to make up a four week prac. at the beginning of June this year and after this have my surgery July 13th. There is a massive job freeze on in the health industry at hospitals ATM for nurses and the chances of getting a grad program as a nurse is zilch! I was lucky enough to be two out of over 100 to be chosen for a grad program at a particular private hospital as a theatre nurse in September, I was offered another grad program at another hospital on medical wards also! I chose the first! My doctor was amazing and wrote me a medical note for a sickness benefit for the next three months so I can focus on myself and getting through this incredibly hard time!

My job as a multi skilled career is great and the nurses and my bosses have been overwhelmingly supportive and patient with me! This year has been a constant spiral of downward sadness from death in the family, amongst other family dramas, and this! But I count myself pretty lucky with my loved ones I have surrounding me. And all I have achieved! I moved out of home at 19 and since living out of home I carried out an assistant in nursing traineeship, graduating as the outstanding assistant nurse of the year award for the hospital I worked at, I've also carried out my nursing diploma part time so I could still afford to work full time and pay my rent and bills, I had a huge breakup after three years of being together, lost two of my best friends and moved around a lot! Currently I've managed to achieve all of this, met the absolute love of my life, we have a beautiful home together and plans for a very bright, happy, successful future! No matter what it holds! I've finished all of my theory for my nursing diploma and just have a makeup prac to do in the next month before I receive my nursing registration through the mail!

So as you can imagine I have anxiety that is through the roof at the idea of having to complete a four week surgical prac, have surgery, recover, pay bills/rent ETC and start my grad program as a theatre nurse in September! It sounds impossible! One thing I need to remember, I have endometriosis! It doesn't have me! Endometriosis has taken so much from me! But I won't let it take anymore! I will get through this! I'm lucky enough to have a super supportive partner who has been so amazing and each time I've been in hospital he hasn't left my side! And an incredible best friend who has said she will be my surrogate if it comes to that! Which we hope with all our hearts it doesn't! I'm not very close with my family at all! I've always been much the black sheep so to speak of my family, so my friends and my partner and my partner's family mean more to me than anything in the world! My partner and I have a beautiful dog he is a staffy X bullmasitive and he is so special! If I could just have four of him if we can't conceive that will be good enough for me! My partner has a gorgeous little girl who is 7 and she is just so perfect! She lights up our world! Each day is a huge struggle but I have a history of victory so I refuse to give up anything! I'm an endo warrior! - *Natasha*