

Staying Active



In '99, after three years of vomiting and an inability to pretty much eat (well, keep it down), I was admitted to hospital with a mass in my stomach. The mass turned out to be a pocket of infection caused by actinomycoses - apparently 2-3 people in NZ suffer from each year. A few months after the mass was excised and with still no improvement, I needed a small bowel resection. They detected a presence of Crohn's, but decided that it wasn't enough to be concerned about - no medicines were even prescribed.

I was fine until a few years ago until I started experiencing upset stomachs - and at the time I blamed it on dodgy meals, or takeaways, or stress. My GP at the time wasn't concerned and years went by with no tests - and therefore no results indicating Crohn's - but my periods of illness became more frequent and of a longer and more intense nature.

I moved to Australia in 2008, and found that this undiagnosed illness was, rather usurpingly, having a rather detrimental effect on my life. Like the little things - like being reliable when it came to work shifts, socialising, eating - sometimes even having enough energy to get out bed.

In February 2010 I married my wife in NZ, and instead of the planned honeymoon which was to include travel around the South Island, I had a very intense attack days after the ceremony, which despite me trying to battle on, saw me spend the fortnight of my honeymoon admitted to Christchurch Hospital. Even heavily medicated, I found that on my return to Sydney I was unable to carry on with my job in hospitality. This job, even though flexible and only 20 hours a week, was proving far too physically demanding for me.

Fortunately I started to respond to the medicines I was prescribed and in August I felt strong and able enough to start a full time job as a photographer. However the 'attacks' kept coming and in November I was admitted to St Vincent's Hospital in Sydney, and a few weeks later had my second bout of bowel surgery to remove a section that was affected by Crohn's.

I've been lucky enough to have a fantastic wife and family, and to be looked after by incredible doctors - both here in Sydney and in NZ. Even though Crohn's has kicked me around for the past few years, I still try to stay as active as I can - I've

completed a 22 day Outward Bound course, completed two half-marathons and have even trekked to the Base Camp of Everest.