



**A collection of personal stories from Veterinary Nurses suffering from a Chronic Illness or Condition.**

### **A personal story by Hannah Olliff-Lee**



When I think of chronic illness I think of Fibromyalgia, endometriosis, and other labelled conditions. It's why I think it took a long time for me to really investigate my own health, because needing a doctor was for sick people right? I didn't want to waste their time or be the person that put pressure on the NHS. However, after being very poorly at the birth of my son, I thought it really was time to be a grown up and ensure I am healthy.

#### **How I discovered my illness**

I would never say I wasn't healthy, but I would always say I was tired, emotionally? mentally? physically? Let's be honest, all of these in varying degrees at various points. I was in a stressful position where I would constantly try to prove myself and if it didn't work, I would just work harder. I was always suffering from:

- Colds
- sinus infections
- Tonsillitis
- hay fever
- Eczema
- Digestive issues
- General skin rashes/acne
- Mouth ulcers

But I told myself I worked hard, and I was just “run down” or “burnt out”. I didn’t realise that being unwell on and off through the year made me chronically ill. How did I not see this?!

### **My diagnosis**

So fast forward to now, as part of my ‘let’s get healthy’ campaign, I decided to have my chronic skin condition looked at. After various treatments my doctor diagnosed me with autoimmune Seborrheic dermatitis and eczema, not the fanciest of chronic illnesses but when I explain why you will see the relevance. Seborrheic dermatitis is an over creation of Malassezia in the skin resulting in a red flaky rash and is caused by my immune system attacking itself. Meaning that my immune system has been so busy attacking me, it isn’t attacking any germs that enter my system. Suddenly my rashes, gastrointestinal upsets, tiredness, and chronic illness all made sense.

### **Starting to move forward**

So, I began researching how I could support my immune system to help me control my condition, here’s what I’ve learnt:

- Good quality sleep
- Stay hydrated
- Minimize stress
- A healthy diet (my biggest struggle) especially vitamins B, C and E
- Exercise - the running trainers are on order from amazon
- Reduce your alcohol and sugar intake
- Take care of your gut - 70% of your immune system is in your gut so it needs caring for. I have started some pre and probiotics to help support my gut.



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