

Life after Transplant

I was very ill by the time I got my new lungs and I had to be put on the super urgent list and onto ECMO (Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation). That meant that my recovery was never going to be the most straightforward but I got through it and left hospital after 7 weeks to continue my recovery at home.

I had lost a lot of weight and I was very weak but gradually I built my strength up to the point that just two months after I was discharged from hospital I was able to go on holiday to the Lake District. I couldn't have even contemplated going somewhere like that pre-transplant. I needed 6 litres of oxygen just to walk around my house so going somewhere very hilly like the Lake District would have been incredibly difficult.

Seven months after my transplant I picked up an infection that made me extremely ill and I had to be on a ventilator again and spent another 5 weeks in ICU at Harefield. The first year post transplant is a tricky time because you're extremely vulnerable to infections. Despite following all of the advice that Harefield gave me I still ended up getting ill but I was very fortunate to recover and without any lasting damage to my lungs.

Even though after transplant there are many dangers and potential complications to navigate it's still been absolutely all worth it for me.

I no longer wake up every day and wonder if today will be a 'good day' in terms of how I feel. I just feel well every day, without even trying and without having to do hours of physio or spending all night on my NIV to get there.

I breathe without thinking about it, without it hurting or feelings like my lungs are exhausted.

My day isn't spent doing nebulisers and physios and I don't have a constant cough anymore.

When I exercise, instead of feeling horrendous and exhausted I feel invigorated and energised and like I want to do more.

I'd say because I got ill after my transplant, and then the world went into a pandemic I haven't been able to do quite as much as I would have liked to by now, such as travelling abroad. But once things are a bit safer I'll hopefully be able to travel again.

In the meantime I got married and I'm starting a business so I've still been busy. I also have a little niece now and I would never have got to meet her if I hadn't got my transplant.

I have found that life after transplant isn't necessarily about ticking off the big bucket list things, although that is fun!

What it's really about though is feeling well on a daily basis, and still being here to enjoy every day things that most people take for granted