



Meagan Slater – My Cancer Journey

“Being made to feel beautiful at a time when you are so low was one of the best memories of my journey with cancer”

Meagan, 22, had always been an active and fit individual for her age.

She was proud of her body and like many of us, ramped up the activity when she wanted to look especially good for big events.

But in December 2012 just before her brother’s wedding, her mother made comment on just how much weight she had lost. While Meagan had noticed that although she had dropped in size she seemed to be bloated, and was annoyed her normally flat stomach was protruding despite the rigorous training. The final straw came when someone asked her when she was due, assuming she pregnant! It was time to see a doctor.

Her GP ran some routine tests. Although they could tell something was not quite right with her results, they had never seen anything like this before. While it was initially thought to have been an ovarian cyst, her doctor became very concerned when further tests revealed something much more sinister; a 22cm growth compressing Meagan’s vital organs.

On February 14 2013, Meagan underwent surgery to remove the growth, but woke to find out they had removed a rare, cancerous tumour. She had germ cell ovarian cancer.

She was referred to the Youth Cancer Services (YCS) at the Sir Charles Gardiner Hospital, but was quite unsure what to expect... she only knew this was a new service catering specifically for young cancer patients.

She recalls her very first day at the YCS as if it was yesterday.

“I’ll always remember when the YCS staff members Kendall, Meg and Orietta came to meet me as soon as I got there, they were so friendly and welcoming! They all explained their roles and reassured me that they would be there every step of the way” Meagan said. “My nurses helped me understand everything, from the process of treating my cancer to some of the potential side effects that I may have from the chemotherapy. It really felt like they understood me, and I didn’t feel alone knowing I had them there.” she said.

Meagan began her treatment in March, where she would undergo a gruelling regime of chemotherapy.

“From sleepless nights and losing my hair from chemotherapy, the staff of the YCS were there every step of the way, holding my hand alongside my family and friends. They never let me give up, they never let me lose hope, even when I felt as though I couldn’t go on anymore.”

No matter what was happening, the Youth Cancer Services were there through every hurdle – even heartbreak.

“One of the hardest things I went through was the break up with my long term boyfriend. I was devastated. It was a time when I leant on the friends I had made at the YCS the most, and seeing a psychologist definitely made a big difference to the healing process” Meagan explained.

Another big adjustment for Meagan was losing her hair.

“I remember being told nobody can truly prepare you for losing all of your hair. It was true. It was so hard... I almost felt like I’d lost myself in a way” she said.

“Youth Cancer Services invited the girls to an event with makeup artists and stylists... all of the girls got to take off their wigs, or their hats and be pampered. For the first time in a long time, we felt beautiful!” she recalls.

