

Don't let me **DIE**

I fell ill during my honeymoon and never got better...

Jessica Heather, 32, from Hertfordshire

Boarding the plane to Olu Deniz, Turkey, with my husband Wayne, then 27, I couldn't have been more excited to get off on our honeymoon together.

It was summer 2014 and we had actually just tied the knot.

'It's going to be a trip to remember!' I smiled.

Wayne and I had been together for over two loving years.

Our wedding had been a massive celebration, and we had wed in the same church as Wayne's parents.

Our favourite thing to do together was travel the world.

Trying local cuisines, sightseeing and exploring.

This holiday was going to be the best one yet – our first trip as man and wife.

Only, it wasn't quite as smooth sailing as we expected...

On the second day, we had a delicious Turkish meal at a local restaurant, then both fell ill with food poisoning.

'I don't feel too good,' I said to Wayne at the hotel.

The food was lovely – it was just too rich for our stomachs.

We spent the next few days in the hotel room.

Wayne recovered fully, but I still seemed to have an upset stomach.

Determined to still make it the best trip ever, we stuck to our honeymoon plans.

Visiting a mud bath and going on a jeep safari, we had an amazing time.

When we travelled back

to the UK, I knew something still wasn't right with my body.

My stomach was in agony and I had bowel problems.

I had been diagnosed with endometriosis in my teens, but my symptoms were unrelated.

'I need to go to the hospital,' I told Wayne in agony.

I was kept in hospital for 10 long days and treated for severe food poisoning as a result.

Then, when I returned home, more problems emerged.

It was one thing after the other – I suffered fatigue, joint pain, memory

loss and severe headaches, while Wayne was completely back to normal.

At the time, I was working in healthcare, but I had to keep calling in sick.

I was forgetting people's names, and even how to talk.

What's wrong with me? I thought.

How did all of this start with food poisoning – was that possible?

I was in and out of hospital, and a doctor diagnosed me with fibromyalgia – a condition that causes pain across the body.

Only, it didn't explain the rest of my symptoms.

It was supposed to be the start of our married life but, if anything, it was a disaster.

Over the following few years, I was diagnosed with different conditions and syndromes by

Having the time of our lives



It was one thing after the other

numerous physicians, brain doctors and cardiologists, too.

I struggled to cope with the physical side effects and it caused a strain on my mental health as well.

In January 2017, my anxiety got really bad and I had a severe anxiety attack at work.

I hit rock bottom. 'We'll get through this together,' Wayne promised me.

I was diagnosed with borderline personality disorder, and it was a mutual decision that I should leave work to prioritise my health.

At home, I continued to develop new symptoms – mouth ulcers, skin lesions and lots of blackouts.

'I'm going to try you on a new medication,' my doctor said.

Still wanting to do what we loved most, Wayne and I booked a trip back to Olu Deniz, Turkey.

It was so lovely being back. A bittersweet reminder of where my body had changed.

In early 2019, I was referred to the London Centre of Excellence in Royal London Hospital to see specialist medical professionals.

They tested to see if I had Behcet's syndrome – a rare and poorly understood condition that results in inflammation of the blood vessels and tissues.

Behcet's syndrome is incurable, but symptoms can be treated. Symptoms include mouth ulcers, skin lesions, painful joints, headaches and abdominal pain.

I ticked all the boxes. 'I believe you have a mild form of the disorder,' a rheumatologist told me.

'How did this all come from food poisoning?' I asked.

They believed it could have all stemmed from bacterial factors, but they couldn't explain how my body had never recovered – still, it



Before our world turned upside down



OUR HONEYMOON NIGHTMARE

hospital, and the doctor diagnosed me with a second condition – gastroparesis.

Gastroparesis is a rare condition that affects the normal movement of the muscles in your stomach.

It meant that my stomach was practically paralysed, and it couldn't digest food properly.

From then on, I was sent home on a low fibre diet.

Drinking soup, I thought of all the incredible cuisines Wayne and I had tried over the years, and longed to be trying new foods, travelling the world.

Wayne even became my registered carer.

Then, one day... 'I need to go to hospital,' I told Wayne, vomiting blood.

'It's a good job you came,' the doctor said. 'You are severely malnourished, Jessica.'

We took a trip to Thorpe Park and I vlogged everything. Our family and friends loved it, and even strangers, too.

Then, in June 2020, my symptoms worsened – I had hot flushes, severe joint pain and I was vomiting often. I was taken for a CT scan in

I truly thought it was the end

hospitals?' Wayne suggested.

I started filming my time in hospital and sent him the footage for our YouTube channel.

It gave me something to focus on each day and had a really positive impact on my mental health.

When doctors suggested I try a plasma exchange, I filmed that experience, too.

On the first day, they trialled substitute plasma and it went really well.

Then, on the second day, they tried real donated plasma, and I suddenly began to show up in a rash.

'I can't breathe,' I croaked, as my throat began to close up as a result, too.

'She's having an anaphylactic shock,' I heard the medical team say, as I drifted out of consciousness.

'Please don't let me die,' I remember saying.

I truly thought it was the end.

'We're going to give you a shot of adrenaline now, Jessica,' the nurse explained to me.

Thankfully, I came around not long after.

'You had us worried,' the doctor said, explaining how my body had



Nobody could say what had happened



Through sickness and in health

an allergic reaction.

'We'll continue to try substitute plasma,' he said.

After a few days, I was able to eat and walk again.

Spooning a tiny portion of mash and gravy into my mouth, I felt victorious.

'I'm getting better each day,' I told my YouTube subscribers.

In October, I had a dialysis catheter fitted on my chest.

Then, I was released home and reunited with Wayne, having to take a six-weekly rota of a certain plasma called albumin.

Even now, I am in a lot of pain, and I can't do things that I love.

I can eat and walk, although one day I might need an NG tube and a wheelchair, too.

My life has changed forever, but I try to remain positive.

I can't believe this started on my honeymoon, but I am just grateful to be here with Wayne.

We have continued to film our lives for YouTube.

I want to help as many people as I can that could have or have been diagnosed with Behcet's syndrome

by doing so.

I advise everyone to reach out to charities and push for referrals.

Behcet's UK and Guts UK have both been amazing!

Wayne and I have our own website, as well as our YouTube channel, where we document our travels, as well as raising awareness to give recognition to rare conditions, invisible illnesses and disabilities, too.

I can't wait to see what adventures Wayne and I can continue in the future – there are so many trips waiting to be had.

Make sure to subscribe to 'Holiday With The Heathers' on YouTube and for more information visit: holidaywiththeheathers.com

TRUSTING YOUR GUT

Guts UK is the charity for the digestive system – they fund research, provide information and raise awareness.

With new knowledge, Guts UK will end the pain & suffering for the millions affected by digestive diseases.

Please visit: gutscharity.org.uk to learn more.