

Love the skin you're in and love the day

I thought I was going to die and we weren't even married yet!

I had my first Stoma at 22 for very fast onset UC. It was a huge shock and unplanned but it changed my life wholeheartedly for the better and as I started living with a stoma I adjusted easily to the changes with great support from my family and my boyfriend at the time, who is now my husband!

I shall always remember my time in hospital as my lovely dad was in the bay next door. He'd been diagnosed with prostate cancer and although we were positioned in different bays, our beds were 'back to back' and so we'd knock on the wall to just offer support to each other! I was offered the chance of a J-pouch at 25 and thought long and hard before giving it a shot. It wasn't plain sailing but my J-pouch is now 19. I've recently made the decision to let it go as I require a hysterectomy too and my colorectal surgeon made a quiet suggestion that maybe it's time to let my 'sometimes naughty' J-pouch go, in joint surgery between him and a gynaecologist!

So I'm soon to be back with my faithful life-changing stoma that gave me back my life, my health love for my own body and new vigour for life and less pain!

I first joined IA two weeks post op with my stoma in my 20s and I won a Dyson vacuum in a raffle at the first ever IA meeting I attended. I'm now 43 and went on to join the committee of Merseyside IA. There's no shame in stoma surgery it's life-saving, life changing and gives people their lives back. Love the skin you're in and love the day.

My husband has been amazing. He has kept me laughing and positive through all the surgeries and the ups n downs of illness. I've been a size 8 to size 22 in our time together and not once have I ever felt unattractive with all surgical things I've had going on. I remember having surgery to repair a rectovaginal fistula which didn't go to plan. A few days later I ended up back in hospital, bleeding out and the crash team bringing me back! As this was happening my fiancé walked in and I said, "Gosh I'm going to die and we aren't even married yet!"

Thankfully I made a recovery and six weeks later on the day we'd met years 20 years before and got engaged on 19 years earlier, we got married in Las Vegas! It was a complete surprise to me as my hubby had organised it all.



I have been amazing support from day one, the first lady I met was Sylvia and she was amazing. She even helped me with a grant for some new clothes as I was out of work at the time and had lost lots of weight!

I have a few funny and positive stories that have got me through too.

I remember at a wedding when I'd first had my stoma surgery I was dancing at my best friend's evening reception and my bag whizzed off and landed on the floor! I did a very random 'squat to the floor' move and scooped it up. Luckily it was dark and from then on I wore a belt with my bags!



I was having surgery to change seton strings a few months ago and was sitting quietly reading awaiting the anaesthetist. He came in and said "So do you know what you are having done in your procedure today?", I replied "Yes, I'd like my boobs lifted and a new face!" He went red and said to the other theatre staff, "I think we've got wrong patient" and we all laughed and I said, "No, I'm just having some new bows put in my abscess to brighten things up downstairs!"

