

Caring about cancer



MiniMag
Cares

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CHOC helps us understand the people that deal with cancer on a daily basis.

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Sarah Strydom
18 years old

We asked cancer survivor, Sarah Strydom, a couple of questions about living with cancer and her battle with the disease. This is her story:

I was diagnosed with Ewing's Sarcoma just after my 8th birthday. My treatment involved 13 blocks of chemo, radiation and an operation. Despite what I have been through, I became an interprovincial badminton player and have recently published a book: "Spunky", which explains my cancer story. I am now 18 years old and have just finished matric.



Was it difficult to keep up with schoolwork and did your friends and teachers help you?

I was off school for the whole of Grade 3 while I had my cancer treatment. My mom would fetch my school work for me and bring it to me in hospital. My teachers made sure that I was kept up to date with what the rest of my class was doing.

Did you have a special diet and could you exercise?

I was not allowed to eat any food such as biltong, yoghurt, take-aways or re-heated food. These foods have elevated amounts of bacteria and as my immune system was low, I did not want to increase any chance of infection. I had an operation to remove the tumour in the muscle in my thigh so I had a lot of physio and biokinetics to teach me how to walk again.

Did having cancer change your daily routine? How?

Yes, I spent most of that year in hospital, so my daily routine changed a lot. When my treatment was over, I went back to school and my routine went back to normal, although there were still many check-ups.

What did you do when you were not feeling well that day?

I would keep busy, drawing, singing and writing if I felt well enough. The chemo made me tired, so I spent a lot of time sleeping.

Did you feel different to other children?

Emotionally I think I can handle situations better than other people as I have been through a tough time. Physically I feel differently as I walk with a limp and am not able to run as fast as I used to.

Do you think that you have become stronger because you were ill? And how?

Yes, I appreciate all the little things in life and don't take anything for granted. I have seen many of my friends in hospital pass away and I think this has made me a stronger person.

How has CHOC helped you?

From the first day I stepped into the Oncology ward, CHOC was there to support me and my family. They helped us understand what kind of cancer I had and what we could expect. They put me in contact with other children suffering from the same kind of cancer, so that we could share our experiences. They regularly invite me to CHOC functions and keep in contact with me. They helped me understand that I was not alone in my battle with cancer. It always helps to talk to people who truly understand.



CHOC
Childhood Cancer Foundation
South Africa
"Keeping more than hope alive"