

## Amy's Story

In 2004, Amy was a law student at Sussex University. In April of that year she developed a dry itchy cough for which she was given antibiotics by her GP. Her cough became worse and she was given more antibiotics. In 3 months she lost over a stone but put it down to stress of study. No-one mentioned TB as a possibility, except her uncle, but she dismissed this since she'd had BCG.

From Sept-Dec 2004 at Uni she became more and more tired but didn't go to the doctor. She went home for Christmas and everyone noticed she'd lost a lot of weight. She went to her GP and was referred to hospital - by January night sweats had started. Her appointment took 6 weeks to come through because the first letter had got lost in the post. She had an x-ray then the hospital decided to do a bronchoscopy and sputum test.

Amy was finally diagnosed and put on treatment for TB in April 2005 – a full year after she first had a cough. By this time she weighed 5 and half stone (previously she had weighed 8 stone). One month after diagnosis an x-ray showed that one of Amy's lungs had collapsed. She was hospitalised for 2 weeks and given physiotherapy to help with her lung. She continued treatment until January 2006 when she was given the all clear.

Over the next couple of months Amy saw red circles on her legs, her cough came back and became increasingly worse, she was being sick and felt very tired and was losing weight. She went to her GP and A&E a number of times and was eventually admitted as she had a lot of pus surrounding her lung. This was found to be a pneumonia related infection and that her TB had also re-occurred. This was put down to the fact that her lung had collapsed and the bacteria had not all been killed off. Amy was put back on treatment and in May 2007 had an operation to remove her left lung.

Throughout this experience Amy had a lot to contend with. She lost her hair at one point, and missed so much of her course and exam work that she is still trying to complete her first year while many of her friends are graduating. But throughout it all she has remained positive and whenever she can, gives her time in volunteering for TB Alert. Amy told us that when she was diagnosed with TB she was simply relieved to find out what it was - she had thought it was asthma. She didn't consider TB as she thought it was a Victorian disease, she'd had BCG and wasn't coughing up blood. She wouldn't have known what signs and symptoms to look out for.

A message from Amy:

*"There are many people in certain countries that don't get access to treatment or good healthcare for a variety of reasons. TB Alert fund various projects overseas which help to ensure that more people get CAN get access to these life saving drugs enabling more lives to be saved. I am lucky enough to live in the UK where getting access to treatment isn't such a huge problem and good healthcare is far easier to access. If I had been born elsewhere my fate might have been very different.*

*Despite all my complications I still consider myself very lucky to have been treated by a great team of doctors both at Ealing Hospital and Hammersmith Hospital not to mention the lovely TB Nurses and numerous other support staff who have stuck by me over the past two and half years. By volunteering for TB Alert, this is my way of giving something back to those less fortunate than me.*

*PS One last thing to remember- TB is a CURABLE disease. Yet 2 million people a year die from TB. It shouldn't be happening. Please think about this...."*