

# Salma's story

My name is Salma\*, I am 32 years old and I have Crohn's disease. I work as a banker in Dubai and I have lived in the UAE most of my life.

\*name has been changed.

## Life before Crohn's

Before I became ill, I was a happy-go-lucky kind of person.

☞ When the doctor told me I have Crohn's disease, and not cancer, I was actually relieved that my worst suspicions hadn't been confirmed. But then slowly it dawned on me - I am living with a serious, chronic condition for which there is no cure. I asked myself 'Why me?' ☞

## How I felt

It was only after I had experienced the challenges that a severe flare up brings that I could fully understand what living with IBD really meant. For me, this was constant vomiting, diarrhoea, and severe cramps.

## Advice for my younger self

☞ I would like to go back and tell my younger self that, no matter how difficult and painful it seems at times, stay strong and never feel dejected or lose hope. ☞

## My support network

I try and surround myself with people who are supportive and empathetic. I am very lucky as I have countless guardian angels, without whom my journey would have been incomplete.

## Diagnosis

I was initially misdiagnosed. IBD is a confusing condition to live with, and even the doctors have struggled to give me an accurate answer.

☞ I can't help but feel that if I had been diagnosed sooner, I wouldn't have had to suffer for so long. ☞

## Stigma

People just don't want to hear you talking about the painful and embarrassing symptoms of IBD, which can make you feel very alone. Very quickly I lost a lot of my self-confidence.

## Treatment and surgery

Initially medication was able to control my symptoms, but I suffered side effects. Over the years I have tried all the treatments available.

☞ Surgery was my only option to help get back a decent quality of life and free me from the unbearable pain I was in. ☞

## The Future

☞ It has been a difficult and challenging journey. But since finding the right support group, who have helped guide me through it, I am now in a happy place. ☞

