When Your Vagina Lets You Down

Not only do I have a rare cancer, I could have been vaccinated against it if I was just a few years younger.

May 24, 2017 By Amanda Hayes

Oh gosh… So where do you begin? Cancer is a topic that you think will never touch you. Unfortunately if it does, you hope it is on someone who has lived a long and full life or maybe with wishful thinking, someone who is horrible and vile who deserves it. But that is not life. Sometimes life likes to kick you in the balls and says “hey! lets mix things up a bit!”

So back in January, I was officially diagnosed with stage 3 squamous cell vaginal cancer. Now normally when you think of a 28-year-old female diagnosed with cancer you will most likely think of ovarian, cervical or breast cancer. Vaginal cancer I didn’t even hear of before my treatment so I wouldn’t blame you for thinking of those first either!

If you look on the Cancer Research UK website you will see that vaginal cancer affects just 1% of the UK population in their lifetime. It is a cancer that is more likely to affect those over 70… now isn’t that a kick in the teeth? I’ve got an old lady cancer. Once my oncologist got into the nitty gritty parts of my cancer I found out that the survival rate is 40% after treatment! Well holy hell… How are you meant to get your head around that? Thinking about it now, are the statistics so unfair because these ladies have actually died from this cancer? Or is it because they’re so old and other complications occurred?

Vaginal cancer is also on the same strain as the human papilloma virus (HPV). The HPV vaccine was introduced into the UK in 2008 for 12-to-13-year-olds. In 2008, I was 20, so at this point I had already missed that boat to be vaccinated against it. In autumn 2009, a catch-up plan was introduced to vaccinate all girls up to the age of 18. Looking back, I was aware of all the media hype concerning the HPV vaccine but as I wasn’t in the age gap that concerned me I was ignorant to it. Looking at it now though how much more is it a kick in the teeth that I was shy of just 3 years to be applicable for the very vaccine that could have prevented me from having cancer! Not only do I have old lady cancer, I could have been vaccinated against it if I was just a few years younger.

I like to think I’m special. Haha. With life showing me how unpredictable it likes to be I’m thinking I’m not gonna be the average Jo(anne) when it comes to treatment and recovery. With the only thing positive in this whole thing, my age, they threw everything at me that my body could cope with. So in time I’ll tell you as much as I can the fun journey I took with chemotherapy, radiotherapy and brachytherapy. Coz let’s face it… I seem to be a pretty rare case as they keep telling me!

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