

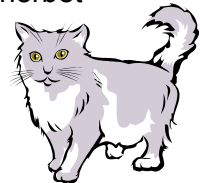
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Anne's Story

Anne's career as a librarian is ideal experience for looking after NZAN's information resource. She's also keen to polish her Internet skills, and keep NZAN members up to date with useful websites.

After leaving school, Anne worked in libraries in Palmerston North, Taupo, then Wellington. She was head librarian at the Eastern Institute of Technology in Hawkes Bay for about 16 years, until five years ago, when she was 50. Her health has restricted future opportunities in the workforce.

Now Anne is enjoying semi-retirement, and a more balanced lifestyle. She has been a keen patch worker for many years. One of her hangings, worked on over a three year period, was included in an exhibition in a Hawkes Bay garden this month. Although during her librarian years Anne didn't read for recreation, she now enjoys reading too. She has been involved locally with the 'English as a second language' scheme, funded through the Dept of Education. She also adores her ginger and white cat Sherbet – who has 25 different miows, she assures us!



This is her story:

I have had eczema all my life, or for as long as I can remember. It flares at times and becomes infected to the degree that I am hospitalised. It was while in hospital in July 1998 with infected eczema that my Skin Specialist ordered some blood tests just before I was discharged. I was diagnosed as having Adrenal Insufficiency, and osteoporosis. I was 53 years old.

The long term use of steroids had caused the adrenals to close down. I remember feeling very tired and quite unwell for some time prior to that hospitalisation. I came home with a prescription for 20mg Hydrocortisone daily, 15 in the morning and 5 at 4pm.

I found that unless I was very careful I got very tired very quickly, and this often led to getting depressed. I found I could work only between eight and ten hours a week without getting overtired. Outside this I was doing some voluntary work. I could control the times I did this and usually managed to do it when I felt good. Stress levels were hard to control. When things were not good I was prone to breaking out in eczema, often badly enough to be hospitalised.



My endocrinologist focused mainly on controlling my osteoporosis. Unfortunately the first few medications we tried caused my skin to break out. Now I am now taking 0.25mcg of Rocaltrol daily for the osteoporosis, which does not affect my skin at all. But I wasn't learning how to incorporate Adrenal Insufficiency into my daily life. One day, nearly two and a half years after my diagnosis, it all got too much and I "hit the wall". I

had found NZAN through the Internet. I made contact, and got some really good support.

Within a couple of days I visited my GP. I had written it all down so that I did not forget anything. I told him my whole story. I did not believe that I had to live such a restricted life. The first thing he did was to increase my Hydrocortisone dose to 30mg, and we have worked together over the following months, reducing it gently. I am now taking 25mg, and still feeling good most of the time. (I am about 5 foot 2 and weigh between 9 and a half and 10 stone.)

As soon as I started taking the higher dose of Hydrocortisone I noticed a difference. It was as if someone had "turned the light on". I felt much more present and alive. I do not get so tired so quickly and when I do I recover much faster. Something that really pleases me is that my brain is now working effectively whereas it was not on the previous dose of Hydrocortisone. I have not had a period of depression since the dose has been increased. I wear a Medic-Alert around my neck and carry a card in my purse. I do not get sick any more than I did before I was diagnosed with Addison's. However my skin condition has become more consistent. It never really clears.

The same visit that he increased my hydrocortisone, my GP referred me, at my request, for a second specialist opinion. That is unfolding comfortably for me so far.

I am not a sporty person. However, since I have had my diagnosis of Adrenal Insufficiency and osteoporosis I have developed the habit of walking as much as possible. I am fortunate to live in an area where there are many different and interesting places to walk. I also go to the Gym twice a week.

I try to live a peaceful ordered life, free from over-commitment. However this does not always work, and I find myself over-committed for the energy levels available. When this happens I extricate myself as quickly and smoothly as possible, and give myself two or three completely free days.

My friends know that I have Addison's, and that I may suffer from lack of energy at times. People I work with either formally or on a voluntary basis, I tell on a "need to know" basis.