

Today is Mastocytosis and Mast Cell Disease Awareness Day. A day where individuals and organizations raise awareness of this rare and complicated disease.

For me it holds a special meaning because I have Systemic Mastocytosis. It's a complicated disease, but to put it plainly my body produces far too many mast cells and they don't behave the way they should. Mast cells contain many chemicals, but most prominently, histamine. When triggered, they release these chemicals into the system to ward off intruders like bacteria, viruses and allergens. Because I have too many mast cells and they don't behave properly, my body becomes overwhelmed with chemicals and causes a nearly perpetual anaphylactic reaction. This means I have near constant bone pain, sinus headaches, nausea, digestive issues, breathing problems, fatigue and the list goes on.

I'm careful to avoid things that may trigger a reaction including scents, extreme temperatures, anxiety and stress, alcohol and certain foods. Having said that, this disease is incredibly unpredictable. Sometimes, things that trigger me one day will cause no problems the next day. It makes it very difficult and frustrating to manage this disease.

I'm not usually quite so open about my personal life, especially not on Facebook. But if I'm going to do my part to raise awareness about Mast Cell Disease, then I need to take a step out of my comfort zone.

I'll close by telling you all the things I'm thankful for. It's quite a list so brace yourself.

First and foremost, I'm so thankful that my husband truly understands all of this and is supportive in every way imaginable. To say any more about this will reduce me to a puddle of tears, but please know that he is amazing.

I'm grateful for friends and family who may not really understand it all, but stand by my side regardless. I'm thankful they believe that even though I may look fine on the outside, my insides are often a mess.

I'm grateful for a health care team that continues to advocate for me and ensure I receive the best care possible.

I'm thankful for an employer who has been incredibly understanding and has gone out of their way to ensure I have whatever I need to take care of my health.

I'm thankful for organizations like Mastocytosis Society Canada (MSC) who are there to support and guide when you're feeling completely overwhelmed. They helped me immensely when I was first diagnosed. Volunteering with them is a small way that I can give back.

Lastly, I'm incredibly thankful for the quality of life that I do have. Supporting mast cell patients across Canada has helped put things into perspective for me. Many patients with this disease are very, very sick and have a poor quality of life. My heart goes out to them, but at the same time I'm very grateful that I can go watch my son play hockey and baseball, and visit his classroom at school, and have coffee with friends, and celebrate holidays with family. These are things I no longer take for granted.

For more information, please visit the [MSC website](#). If you'd like to help us raise awareness, please consider donating to our [Facebook Fundraiser](#) or visit the [MSC website](#) for other ways to donate.

Thank you for reading this long post. I hope I've shone a tiny spotlight on how Mast Cell Disease impacts my life and why I advocate for others. Thank you all for your support!