

Melody Papazis

ASTHMA



My name is Melody Papazis. I am a wife, mom, nurse, and severe asthma fighter.

Severe asthma is waking up in the morning praying it's not raining, too cold, too hot, too humid or too windy.....because asthma.

Severe asthma is taking medications that make you angry, scared, wired, and jittery, like Prednisone. Prednisone keeps us alive but destroys our bodies at the same time.

Severe asthma is being told your lungs are fine because you aren't wheezing, but knowing that you're not wheezing because you're not moving any air.

Severe asthma is watching your twin sister get married and have kids as you quietly cry out to God, "How can I have kids when I can't walk five feet without wheezing?"

Severe asthma is making an extrovert miss out on weddings, parties, and life.

Melody Papazis was a patient speaker at the ATS 2019 International Conference in Dallas, TX.

“To thrive with my severe asthma, I have to fight the good fight every day.”

Severe asthma is not getting your master’s degree, or your dream job as a pediatric pulmonary nurse, because of the exposure to germs.

Severe asthma is countless days in the ICU fighting for every breath while your husband and kids try to maintain a normal life but deep inside they too are scared and afraid.

When I was dismissed from my local pulmonary doctor, my life changed for good. I was placed in the hands of Dr. White and Dr. Hogarth from University of Chicago, who LISTENED to me. Dr. White ran tests that should have been done years before. Because he took the time to listen, I am alive, and I am way more alive than I was 10 years ago. I am blessed.

To thrive with my severe asthma, I have to fight the good fight every day. I have to eat healthy, take my daily asthma medications, exercise and monitor my peak flows daily. I have to drink lots water, listen to my body and when my peak flow is in my caution zone I have to adhere to my doctor’s instructions. I have to realize that my body requires more rest and sleep than the average person and not beat myself up. I have to be okay with calling it quits early on my 11 hour shifts as a telephone triage nurse on days when talking is just too much.

I feel very blessed to have organizations like the American Thoracic Society and Allergy and Asthma network that are fighting with me and giving me so much support and guidance. ■

Asthma is a chronic disease that affects the airways of your lungs. When you have asthma, your airways become swollen. This swelling (inflammation) causes the airways to make thick, sticky secretions called mucus. Asthma also causes the muscles in and around your airways to get very tight or constrict. This swelling, mucus, and tight muscles can make your airways narrower than normal and it becomes very hard for you to get air into and out of your lungs. Frequent lung or sinus infections can cause asthma. Irritants that can also cause asthma are:

- Exhaust fumes from cars, buses, trucks etc.
- Chemicals like garden sprays.
- Molds and dust.
- Strong odors from paint, perfumes, colognes, hair spray, deodorants, and cleaning products.
- Tobacco smoke from cigarettes, pipes, or cigars.
- Temperature or weather changes.
- Stress or exercise.
- Medications, including aspirin and betablockers (heart or blood pressure medicine).
- Sulfites in foods such as dried fruits, wine and beer.

Learn more: ATS Patient Education Series. "What is Asthma?" New York, NY. www.thoracic.org/patients/patient-resources/resources/asthma.pdf.