

# bung lungs and a big heart

Katie Reed, 14, from Whangerei on the North Island of New Zealand, lives with laughter, love and a lung disease

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I started to be ill in 2010 and my family knew something was wrong when within 15 months I had seven bouts of pneumonia. It was a bit scary as I didn't know what was happening and I missed out on a lot of school and activities like Pippins and Brownies (Girl Guides). Paediatric doctors treated me when I had pneumonia, and I was diagnosed with Bronchiectasis in 2012.

*Bronchiectasis is a lung disease which is caused by chronic infection in the small airways of the lungs. This infection causes some parts of the lung to become damaged, scarred and dilated with infected mucus building up in pockets.*

The symptoms of bronchiectasis are coughing up yellow or green mucus every day, shortness of breath, feeling tired, fevers and/or chills, wheezing or a whistling sound while breathing, and loss of appetite.

I don't have as much energy as other kids my age, so I can't do all the activities they do. My health often causes me to miss out on fun activities, family time and good food as when I'm sick I don't eat much. I try not to let it get me down though.

*On April 7 2015 Katie appeared on 7 Sharp, a current affairs programme in New Zealand.*

I was on television for the opening of the New Zealand Bronchiectasis Foundation and although being interviewed was

kind of nerve racking, it was exciting. The foundation is a not-for-profit organisation which is dedicated to providing support to those who live with Bronchiectasis and to those who care for people with the disease, raising awareness of the condition.

It's taken time, but I have learnt to deal with my condition and I've accepted it into my life. I manage it by keeping up with all my medications, which include a nebuliser and inhaler, resting often, exercising and taking nutritional supplements and essential oils. I also visit the hospital up to eight times a year for antibiotics and intensive respiratory physiotherapy. Every time I go I stay at least two weeks. I'm very lucky to have a supportive group of family and friends who help me stay positive. When I'm in hospital my friends visit me and sometimes I get to stay at my Nan's house for respite care, so I'm always surrounded by laughter and love.

Due to my condition I miss out on a lot of school, so I'm dual enrolled at the Northern Health School, which is a government funded school for children who cannot attend school full-time due to medical or mental health reasons. I also do some correspondence schooling as well, but when I return to school I often feel left out after being away sick for a long time. When I'm not at school and have some free time I listen to music, watch anime, read and write stories. I also like horse riding, surfing, swimming, hanging out with friends and playing video games. I don't know what I want to be when I'm older but I'm still excited for what the future holds.