

**LUPUS  
CANADA**  
Life Without Lupus



**What's your lupus story? We'd love to hear it.** *Send us your thoughts and experiences to be featured in Lupus Canada's national monthly e-newsletter. Email your stories to [leanne.mielczarek@lupuscanada.org](mailto:leanne.mielczarek@lupuscanada.org)*

## *Preparing for the Holidays*

DECEMBER E-NEWSLETTER

As the year comes to a close and the holidays are approaching, it is a perfect time to make some memories with your family, celebrate the season and spread love. However, this month can get really stressful too, as you juggle last minute gift shopping, visits from relatives and prepping for the big day, no matter what you celebrate.

If you are still deciding on a few gifts, you may consider donating to Lupus Canada with an "In Honour" or "In Memory" donation. Not only will you be supporting Canadians living with lupus, but you can honour a special person or memorialize a someone in your life. With this donation, you will receive a personalized card to whomever you choose.

Please visit <https://www.lupuscanada.org/ways-to-donate/> to learn more about us and ways you can help.

Lupus Canada wishes you Happy Holidays and thanks you for your support on our journey towards a life without lupus!

# ***Happy Holidays***

***from the Board and Staff at Lupus Canada***

## My Lupus Story by Tara Howse

Although I can't say definitively that my trigger can be traced to an episode of giardia, there's no doubt that the parasite was, at minimum, a significant contributor to my flare. A common backcountry parasite that is transmitted through untreated water, it causes severe gastrointestinal issues (a.k.a. diarrhoea – and lots of it). I picked it up somewhere in Northern California during my 2015 attempted thru-hike of the



Pacific Crest Trail. After about a month of hiking over 20 miles a day without any desire to eat and unable to keep what food I did try inside of me, I was forced to quit the trail upon entering Oregon in late August. To say I was devastated would be an understatement. I spun into depression and here is where the official lupus-story enters my life. Although I began to improve physically, my gastro issues were never quite restored and my emotional and mental states hadn't recovered by the winter of 2016.

Falling ill in late February, I assumed the flu had finally caught up with me. I remember coming back from a meeting with my forearm screaming at me. I was wracking my brain seeking for the incident when I had broken or fractured it. Within 48 hours, I was sobbing on the couch from any effort I made to walk, sit, laydown, or pick up anything. My husband was travelling for work but I eventually told him what was happening to me. Urging me to see our family doctor, I made an appointment and hobbled my way to the office the following week wherein her concern was palpable as she took in my swollen. Her very touch on any part of my body made me involuntarily cry out and my wedding rings would not budge off my fingers.

I knew when I received the call from the doctor's office to come in that it wasn't good news. Although she couldn't provide the formal diagnosis, she indicated her suspicions to be lupus, based on my ridiculously high ANA results, and referred me to a rheumatologist. Blood and urine work revealed I would also need a nephrologist (plus kidney biopsy) and, later on that summer, a respirologist as a result of a pulmonary embolism (and pleurisy).

I was now experiencing depression as I came to terms with what this illness' encroachment in my life would mean plus still trying to recover from knowing I was a failed thru-hiker. Although Lyme disease was regularly discussed, I can now say, without hesitation, that I do have lupus. Learning the symptoms made me realize that I used to experience some flares as a youth (albeit, on a considerably less intense scale).

During that terrible summer of 2016, I could not engage in the outdoor activity I love nor had any work to occupy me. My husband and I decided it was time for me to complete my Undergraduate degree, something I had been working on for 6 years. Self-paced, I could register with the disability services offered and be given some leniency with due dates and exam scheduling. I created an aggressive school plan for myself to complete my degree by the fall of 2017 and this goal provided me some direction and purpose, ultimately helping improve my mental state. When I received the call in August 2016 that I had been selected as a recipient for the Lupus Canada Scholarship Program, I cried. Although the money was obviously appreciated, it was the affect of knowing that a national organization believed in my scholastic ability to achieve that overwhelmed me. Having recently undergone my kidney biopsy, it was a small piece of good news that I badly needed at that point. Whenever I was feeling upset or frustrated at my slow progress or my reduced capacity to sit and concentrate (how that brain fog was intruding in my studies!), I thought of the gift I received and harnessed that energy to pursue my goal.

Not only did I finish my degree in September 2017, I completed it with distinction. But, wait! There's more. The boost I received from completing my degree encouraged me towards further education: I have been accepted into the Master's program of my choice for a January 2018 start date.

Of course, it's not all smiles and positive thoughts. I am still adapting to the new restraints on my life and I imagine it will be a continual internal dialogue I conduct as I balance my needs versus my wants.

An avid outdoors lover, being told to stay out of both the sun and the cold has been the most difficult aspect for me to handle. (I love the outdoors so much I created a website in 2014 to encourage more women to get outside: [www.activewomen.ca](http://www.activewomen.ca)). The outdoors is a great healer – it reduces blood pressure, alleviates stress through cortisol reduction, improves mood and mental health, helps you sleep better, and makes us both happier and more creative. These are all measured outcomes of the positive impacts of outdoor activity and being told to avoid this was unacceptable. I knew that by measuring the distance and duration of my walks each day would empower and encourage me. I have had to make adjustments to my "post-lupus" life expectations. I've learned how to alter my clothing, equipment, and actions to facilitate my love of mountain biking, hiking, backpacking, and skiing. Although always cautious while in the backcountry, those concerns are heightened now that I'm on a blood thinner. To my fellow outdoorsfolk who are being told to give up these activities, don't despair! It is possible to continue on with what you love. I discuss these issues of exercise and lupus on Active Women and encourage you to follow my blog there for more details, insights, and inspiration.

## Recipe: Roasted Sprouts with Pomegranate & Nuts

Total: 1 hr 5 min

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

Level: Easy



### Ingredients:

- 1 1/4 pounds Brussels sprouts, trimmed and halved
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
- 3 tablespoons pomegranate molasses
- Seeds from 1 pomegranate
- 1/2 cup coarsely chopped toasted hazelnuts
- Finely grated zest of 1 lime
- 1 tablespoon finely grated orange zest

### Directions

- Put the Brussels sprouts in a medium roasting pan; toss with the canola oil and season with salt and pepper. Roast in the oven until light golden brown and a knife inserted into the centers goes in without any resistance, about 45 minutes.
- Transfer the sprouts to a large bowl and add the pomegranate molasses, pomegranate seeds, hazelnuts, and lime and orange zests. Season with salt as needed.

*The recipes used by Lupus Canada have been reviewed and approved by Heather Penney, Registered Dietitian.*

Source: <http://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/bobby-deen/fresh-green-bean-casserole-recipe-2200855>

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***Lupus Canada Inaugural Gala***

**Saturday February 3, 2018**

*For more information be sure to follow us on*

*Twitter, Instagram & Facebook*



**LUPUS  
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Life Without Lupus

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018

5:00PM COCKTAILS

7:00PM DINNER

THE CARLU 444 YONGE STREET

*Ticket Price: \$375*

*Dress: Black tie with a hint of purple*

WWW.LUPUSCANADA.ORG

## **#ISangForLupusChallenge**

Launching Friday December 8, [The Mike On Much Podcast](#) challenges you to post a video singing your favourite song earnestly and seriously – your best effort!

*Who will you nominate?*

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## Working together to conquer lupus

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