

Body-positive woman encourages other young people to embrace the way they are



A body-positive woman who hid away from

people for years because of her skin condition, is using Psoriasis Awareness Week (28 October – 5 Nov) to encourage other young people to embrace the way they are.

Erin Cawdron, 18, suffered in silence with psoriasis - an immune condition which causes red, flaky, crusty patches to build up on the skin – until an appointment at Addenbrooke’s helped turn her life around.

She is now using her experience to help normalise the condition and encourage other young people to stop hiding away.

Erin explained: “I was only 11 when I was first diagnosed with psoriasis, so I didn’t really understand what was going on. I was basically given two big bags of steroid creams and told to get on with it.

“But these didn’t really help. At school, my skin would be burning so much I would ask to go to the toilet so I could apply cream and water to cool it down, but the teachers wouldn’t let me.”

Pressure on social media and its promotion of ‘perfect models with perfect bodies’ also began to take its toll on her self-confidence.

Erin explained: “I started to wear a lot more makeup. In the summer I would wear jumpers and when it got too hot for jumpers I would put makeup on my arms and legs to cover up.”

Over time Erin, who now lives in Littleport, lost more confidence and began to hide herself away.

She added: “It is not just the physical effect the condition has, it’s the emotional side as well. When you are constantly told how bad your skin is, it starts to really affect your mindset and when I started avoiding school it started to affect my education as well.

“It got to the point when I was just sick of hiding and I was getting more and more depressed, so I asked for an appointment with a dermatologist at Addenbrooke’s and it was a real game changer for me.

“For the first time I really felt like someone was listening to me and prepared to understand the mental health side of the condition as well as the physical side.”

Erin’s consultant recommended she undergo a 12 week ultraviolet (UVB) therapy course which uses a specific part of the light spectrum to treat the skin condition. He also encouraged her to look at how changes to her diet and spending more time outdoors can also be beneficial.

“Thanks to the support I received from Addenbrooke’s the condition is under control and I am now a lot more confident. I do wear vest tops and I hardly ever wear makeup. “

Erin is now using her experience to help raise awareness of the condition and encourage other young people to stop hiding and embrace the way they are.

“I really want the condition to be normalised, so the public do not stare at you or think that it is an illness that they can catch.

“I feel this is a very sensitive topic and I would love to get the word out there to school children to spread body positivity and stop them from hiding.”

Her new positive attitude to life has also helped secure a place on a laboratory apprenticeship at Addenbrooke’s which she hopes to start in the next few weeks.