

'MY MAN BEAT TESTICULAR CANCER – TWICE'

As Everyman's Male Cancer Awareness Month comes to a close, singer Holly Rose, 25, tells us what happened when her boyfriend was diagnosed with cancer not once but twice. And he's just 27...

Jon and I had only been an item for three months when it all started. We were sitting on the sofa one evening when Jon, 27, mentioned he had a throbbing pain in one of his testicles. He said there was no lump, but he just had a feeling something was wrong. So he went to the doctors, but they told him, "nothing's there, you're imagining it". Even after checking his testicle they told him, "it's just a bit of gristle". But Jon persisted. "I'm really worried. Can I have a scan?" Eventually they did an ultrasound of his groin and this time it was bad news. "There's a big tumour in your left testicle," the specialist told him. We couldn't believe it. I immediately went into practical mode. "OK, we'll get it sorted," I remember thinking. He was booked in for an operation to remove the tumour that week. I was by his side the whole time. It was the worst time of my life. He was lethargic and seemed exhausted – seeing him so weak was heartbreaking. He was worried about the op, and the

'The cancer was back, and this time it was more aggressive'

fact it could affect his fertility. Also it was so early in our relationship, he wasn't sure if I'd be able to deal with it, although I tried to reassure him I wasn't going anywhere. Thankfully, the operation was a success and they managed to remove the tumour, and a few days later he was discharged from hospital. He came back home and I pretty

much moved into his place to help him recuperate. His parents did everything they could too. It took him a while to heal and there was a long wait before he could walk again, but soon he was back to normal.

Then a few months later he was dealt another blow. He'd found a lump on his other testicle and doctors confirmed his fears – it was cancer. "We're going to get through this, sweetheart," I told him as I drove him home from the hospital, trying not to let my concern show. This time the cancer was more aggressive, so he had to undergo a course of radiotherapy. Although he tried to stay positive, it was impossible for him to hide his devastation at having to go through it – he knew this would be likely to end all chances of us being able to have children naturally. A couple of times he broke down in tears. He'd always said the one thing he wanted in his life was to look his own child in the eye. To have that taken away is a huge thing. He dealt with it as well as he could, then we were given a ray of hope when we found out he could have his sperm frozen, which he did before he started his treatment.

After 10 days of radiotherapy Jon was back at home to recover. The treatment caused him to have hot sweats, but fortunately he didn't have



After his cancer scare, Holly and Jon's relationship is stronger than ever

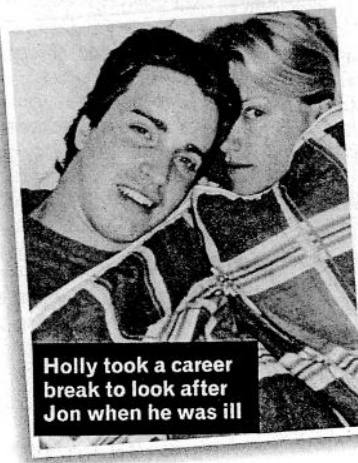
too much of a bad time. A couple of months later he was back at work. He made it his mission to get back to normal, and part of that was to keep fit. He decided he wanted to do a bike ride to raise money for charity, so he started training for a nine-month cycling trip across the Tropic of Cancer, an amazing 11,000 miles. He cycles to work and keeps really active and is so thankful he is well enough to do so. Now he has check-ups every six months, and he's always cautious of any lump or bump, so we do call the doctor quite a lot, just to be sure. I don't think you ever come to terms with the fact you might not be able to have children, but I've got the positivity it's going to happen, whether it's through IVF or whatever. It's part of our plan. The whole experience has made me grow up a hell of a lot, and my priorities have changed. I was in the middle of recording an album when Jon was diagnosed, but I just stopped, I couldn't deal with anything else at that time. A career can come and go, but he won't

and he needed my support. He was given the all clear a couple of months ago – words can't describe how relieved we were. Now we plan to focus on getting on with life. We want to get married and will think about trying for a family in the future. The experience has made our relationship stronger. He's focused on raising awareness and if he can help just one person, he'll feel it's all been worth it. And as his partner, I'm going to stand by him through everything.'

Testicular cancer: the facts

- Testicular cancer mainly affects men aged 15-44.
- It usually presents itself as a lump, which is why it is important for men to check themselves.
- 99% of cases are curable if caught early enough.
- Symptoms include: a lump or enlargement in either testicle, a dull ache in the groin, and growth or tenderness of the upper chest. If you have any of these, see your GP immediately. Visit www.everyman-campaign.org or call 0800 731 9468 for more info.

Words: Dina Behrman. Pictures: Rebecca Bradbury.



Holly took a career break to look after Jon when he was ill

● To sponsor Jon, visit www.tccchallenge.co.uk. Holly's single *Down To One Kiss* is out 6 July on Whisky Records. Visit www.myspace.com/hollyrosemusic