

My name is Meabh Maguire, from Co. Kildare and I was diagnosed with HCU at birth in 1981 through the newborn screening programme. HCU, for me is an inconvenient and often frustrating reality but has never been a show stopper for anything in my life.

HCU as a child was difficult as it's hard to understand why you can't eat what everyone else does and my parents did a great job of ensuring that my diet was strictly monitored. Naturally "strictly" wasn't always possible, there were many bumps in the road and foods were consumed which I wasn't allowed. Despite my strict diet, I had a great childhood and was very sporty, HCU was never a reason I couldn't or wouldn't be able to do something.

After school, I left home at 17 to attend college at DCU, this was probably the most difficult period with my HCU diet and I did go off track a little bit, but with the help of the great dietitians at Temple Street and the support of my family I was able to turn this around. During these years, I developed a love of international travel, working for summers in Germany and America.

Today; I consider myself a sort of vegan (no meat, no dairy) who also doesn't eat high protein foods. I tend to introduce myself as a vegetarian/vegan as it's easier in most cases than explaining the situation in full. I'm lucky to be married to an Italian who is a fantastic chef and makes me lots of delicious low protein pasta dishes.

I have always travelled extensively with work, first working for Enterprise Ireland in the Middle East and also in my current role as Head of MENA Sales for CR2, a software provider based in Park West, Dublin. I could be anywhere from week to week, Ethiopia, Dubai, Dublin or Jordan, and my diet and my medicine come with me before I pack anything else! Because of my work I eat out frequently, sticking mainly to vegan type options, salads and vegetables with potatoes, if there is nothing on the menu, I just ask the waiter, people are very conscious of dietary requirements and always try to facilitate.

In my spare time, I also love to travel, to run and work out (all the things that will concern parents with HCU kids). I've always had a great social life, I love eating out and enjoy a glass of red wine (sometimes too many), and yes I'm annoyed that I can't also have the cheese board, but it's always quickly forgotten.

HCU does often scare me, but it never stops me, you can live a "normal" full and exciting life with HCU. I thank my Mum for never allowing HCU stop me; my diagnosis was very daunting for her in an age where information was very limited, but she had no choice and just got on with it. I am no angel and there are days where I overeat on things I shouldn't; 'real bread' is my Achilles heel, but I just have to stop myself, wake up the next day and start again on a better path. In some ways HCU has given me a no limits attitude to life. If the world was to end tomorrow, I'd spend today gorging on cheese and steak but given the choice I'd way prefer it didn't!!

