

ARTICLE SAMPLE

This story/article was written by Jen Viano for STOP Foodborne Illness' 20th Anniversary Report.

Dana's Story

So early in her life at age 15, Dana Dziadul knows what it feels like to come close to death and live her days with debilitating arthritis.

The reason?

Salmonella-tainted cantaloupe, Dana's favorite food as a 3-year-old that she excitedly enjoyed with her family at brunch on Easter Sunday in 2001. It was at this lovely meal at a beachfront resort near her home in Connecticut that Dana's life—and the lives of her family—would change forever.



The Monday following their wonderful Easter celebrations, Dana came down with a headache and stomach ache. Over the next few days Dana worsened. She was now suffering with a high fever, severe stomach cramping and bloody diarrhea.

Colette, Dana's mom, knew something must be terribly wrong. An emergency room visit and 4 days of tests, consults, ultrasounds and a negative *E. coli* culture didn't show anything conclusive. Her condition improved some, so Dana was able to return home.

But, unfortunately, that wasn't the end of the story.

Just 2 hours after they were discharged from the hospital, Dana's parents received news that no parent should ever have to get: Dana had contracted *Salmonella* poona blood poisoning, a potentially deadly foodborne illness that could result in severe, long-term health issues or end Dana's young life.

Immediately Dana was rushed back to the hospital, a 15-minute drive that felt like an eternity for Dana's parents as they wondered if their little girl would live or die.

After an aggressive course of antibiotics and a long week at the hospital filled with poking, prodding and pain, Dana was finally able to go home for good. Although Dana's days in the hospital are over, *Salmonella* food poisoning has taken a big toll on her health and lifestyle.

At age 11, Dana was diagnosed with reactive arthritis, which resulted from her foodborne illness. This chronic condition causes a great deal of pain in her toes, ankles and knees. Because of this, Dana has just one option for sports—swimming—which she enjoys on her school's Varsity swim team.

Dana says she's got good and not-so-good days. Despite her health challenges and not being able to do everything her friends do, she's an active teenager and loves doing anything with her younger sister, Jenna.

After STOP heard about Dana's experience, we contacted the Dziadul family. We wanted to offer any assistance we could, provide support and give them avenues to share Dana's story.

Through STOP, Dana's found new friends her age who understand what it's like to live with a foodborne illness. And Dana's parents find comfort and strength with fellow parents of children who've suffered. These connections are what Dana puts at the top of the list of what STOP does to help.

When it comes to the issues around foodborne illness, Dana is a passionate advocate. "I worry every day that people are still dying and getting sick. I don't ever want my sister to go through what I go through every day. All because I ate cantaloupe," says Dana.

Dana hopes that all of STOP's friends will take action to bring about changes we need for a safe food supply. Her message? **Commit** to STOP's mission, **Contribute** to the cause and **Connect** with those who've suffered from a foodborne illness.

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