

## Natalie Blair and chronic fatigue - her private Neighbour

Louise Elliott

We, the ever-prying public, tend to view our TV celebrities as creatures of infinite health, wealth and beauty. And although the second may facilitate the third as the years pass by, one factor inhibits the deity we pin our stars to: fallible health. And yes, even our blithe screen idols must care for their bodies to maintain wellbeing.

Options magazine was lucky enough to catch up with hot, young actor Natalie Blair from Neighbours, voted as 'Female Most Popular New Talent' at the 2005 TV Week Logies. Gorgeous Natalie has had her fair share of health concerns, and brings us insight into the "humanity" that stars have to cope with behind the scenes.

For the past few years this Brisbane beauty has battled with chronic fatigue, a highly misunderstood state she experienced after a case of adolescent Glandular Fever. There are tens of thousands of people in Australia that are said to suffer a form of chronic fatigue, a condition frequently, but not always, associated with viral or bacterial infection or chemical toxicity.



Unfortunately due to the little-known nature of the condition, many sufferers have had to endure more than illness itself, often experiencing poor medical and public acceptance and support. With growing research, fortunately more information is being revealed about the truth behind the "tired disease".

Although Natalie has had health hardship, it is her positive attitude to life that has overcome the tough times and now shines through on screen!

We take a look into the real-life health of celebrity, Natalie Blair.

**Options:** Sometimes the public view celebrities as having easy and carefree careers. How intensive is your workload really?

**Natalie:** Aaah! Very Full on! Next week is very scary; I don't get much of a weekend. I get out of bed at 5am and am often not leaving till 7:30pm. I know it's cliché saying, 'acting isn't that glamorous,' but it really is true! Once you go through the scripts after work, you don't have much of a life.

**Options:** What do you do to keep up your energy for such a demanding schedule?

**Natalie:** I'm always big on keeping my energy levels up. At school I had Glandular Fever and at the time I pushed through a lot, so then I developed chronic fatigue. I found that people, who didn't know about the condition, didn't understand me and were unsupportive. The fatigue still affects me today, but not as much as when I was 18. It still takes its toll though.

**Options:** With your health recovering, do you need to watch your diet?

**Natalie:** Due to my history I now eat a lot of snacks throughout the day. Even though people around me are telling me not to have Carbs - "they're bad" - my Nutritionist makes me eat them. So basically I'm on the 'Snack Diet' - I have carbs often but not in huge amounts. I find it really helps my energy.

**Options:** Do you take supplements?

**Natalie:** (Laughs) You name it, I've taken it! I had every type of treatment over the years: Doctors, Naturopaths, Healers; I've even had Vitamin C injections. I don't know how many of them worked! But just eating regularly, I think has helped me the most.

**Options:** Constantly in the public eye, you are often admired as looking trim and athletic.

**Natalie:** You know, sometimes I can't watch my previous episodes because I so don't feel like that! I know I have curves. My weight has fluctuated so much due to sickness and my work schedule, and even due to 'comfort eating' (because I didn't know anyone down here). But now my weight is a lot more stable, just due to having lots of smaller meals more often, rather than 2 or 3 big meals per day.

I don't do that much exercise at the moment. With my heavy workload when I get home it's late. If I then do exercise and jump into bed, I find it hard to sleep! This affects my energy levels again.

Going back, I use to do lots of Cross Country running and sports, but after getting sick with Glandular (Fever) I had to pull out. Now my cardio isn't as good, but I'm gradually getting back into and slowly building up again. I try to focus on keeping a fit and healthy mind and I find that a healthy body follows!

**Options:** When you started shooting Neighbours you had to move to Melbourne. How did it affect your health living away from home?

**Natalie:** It was very hard moving away from the care of my parents. They have always been so supportive and disciplined when it came to looking after my health: stopping me from going out late, for example. Then when I came down here and started Neighbours, if I'd go out one night and party I would be knocked out for weeks! So I've had to grow up quickly and I am grateful for the experience to learn to rely on myself.

**Options:** Having experienced so many treatments in your pursuit for wellbeing, do you take a holistic approach to health?

**Natalie:** Absolutely! I've had some very down times and people say, "You're only 22! What have you got to be miserable about?" But they don't understand what I've been through. I've done everything for my health medically and conventionally. But I've also tried lots of other alternative methods, like kinesiology. It helps and I tell people, "Don't knock it until you've tried it!"

But I saw a huge improvement in my health the more I improved my mind. I am very spiritual and it's the only way I've got through the past few years. I get a lot of energy from my spirituality. I am really big on guardian angels and knowing that guidance is out there, and I am being looked after by someone wiser than me. This was able to get me through a lot!

Options wishes Natalie all the best in good health and looks forward to her lead role in the upcoming, feature film, 'Voodoo Lagoon'. Natalie can be viewed in Neighbours weeknights on Channel Ten at 6:30 pm (AEST).

## STATS

**Full name:** Natalie Louise Blair

**DOB:** 16 April 1984

**Home:** Melbourne; although I'll always call Brisbane home!

**Status:** Partner (sorry guys!)

**Favourite meal:** I can't go past baked Beans on toast! But they have to be cold on the warm bread!

**Chill-time:** I burn incense and mud sticks, and sleep. Lots of sleep!

**Favourite saying or quote:** Everything happens for a reason.

**Life philosophy:** Everything happens for a reason!

**Life Goals:** To work on myself to be mentally healthy, happy and content.