

Musician won't hide psoriasis anymore: 'I don't feel beautiful yet, but I do feel braver'

YAHOO! Yahoo Beauty September 18, 2017



Manila-based musician Moira Dela Torre shared a very personal post on her Facebook page: She suffers from psoriasis, an autoimmune disease that speeds up the growth of skin cells — and she's done covering it up.

"Insecurity: I have psoriasis," she began her post. "No cure for it, just treatments that may or may not help at all."

Dela Torre said her psoriasis first started appearing on her arms, legs, and back when she was in high school and appears each year when triggered by cold, dry weather, or stress. "During these seasons, I would invest in different types of cream, hide it with foundation or, on lazy days, just cover up my entire body with pants and sweatshirts," she wrote. "I remember always looking at other girls with deep envy, wishing I had their skin, wishing I had their legs so I wouldn't have to hide all the time."

Dela Torre says her condition is one of the reasons why she feels shy and vulnerable when she performs. "But today when I saw myself in the mirror wearing this dress and seeing the psoriasis had resurfaced, I started to cry," she wrote. "All the pain and exhaustion from all the hiding and efforts of trying to cure it just came out of nowhere. ... And just when I was about to change, I found myself heading for the door instead."

Dela Torre says she went to work in a dress for the first time, aware of the marks on her legs and decided she wasn't going to hide her psoriasis any more. "I'm no longer gonna let this condition place me in a level of shame and weakness but of strength," she wrote. "No longer will I allow psoriasis to be a basis for my security. I'll be honest. ... I still feel vulnerable. I don't feel beautiful yet. ... but I do feel braver."

Her post has received 18,000 likes since Friday morning, and fans flooded the comments with words of encouragement. About 7.5 million people in the U.S. have psoriasis, according to the American Academy of Dermatology. People who suffer from psoriasis typically have triggers like stress, certain foods, or an infection

that spark flare-ups causing red, itchy, scaly skin patches. But, in between flare-ups, a psoriasis patient's skin often looks normal.

Dela Torre tells Yahoo Lifestyle that she was bullied for being overweight as a kid and, when her psoriasis showed up, she was worried that she would be bullied for it too. "When I moved to Manila, I became a part of the entertainment industry, and I guess that's just what's expected of artists ... flawless skin," she says. "I felt the need to hide because I was afraid to be rejected again."

She says her psoriasis has always made her feel "extremely self-conscious and shy." "There would be days when I wouldn't be aware that the marks had resurfaced and would find people staring at my legs, sometimes looking disgusted because they'd think it was some sort of a contagious allergy," she tells Yahoo Lifestyle. "It became a source of anxiety to me that I didn't realize how hard I had been trying to cover it up and how exhausted I've become of hiding."

Dela Torre went to such great lengths to cover up her spots that people often didn't notice. But when they did, they weren't kind. She recounts a story of how she tried to help a little girl in the grocery store reach something on a high shelf before the girl's mother "snatched her away without taking her eyes off of my legs and stared at me so rudely"; another time, someone in the music industry looked at her legs and told her she should be "more hygienic."

But psoriasis isn't caused by lack of hygiene. The condition is largely caused by genetics, and it's not contagious, **Gary Goldenberg, M.D.**, assistant clinical professor of dermatology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City, tells Yahoo Lifestyle.

Like Dela Torre, many people are bothered by their psoriasis, Goldenberg says. "Most patients try to cover up their psoriasis because of social stigma," he says. Luckily, there are treatments available that can help with flare-ups. Treatments range from topical steroids and other anti-inflammatory creams for mild forms of the disease, to oral medication and biologic injections for patients with more severe forms, Goldenberg explains. But what works for one patient isn't guaranteed to work for another.

Dela Torre says she ultimately decided to write her post on a spur of the moment. "My hurt and pain doubled at the revelation that I wasn't the only one who felt the need to hide and probably felt ashamed," she says. "I want people who don't have psoriasis to be aware of the hidden insecurities people who do [and] try to cover up. I want them to know it's not contagious. And I want people who do have psoriasis, like me, to stop allowing these sicknesses/conditions to define our confidence and our security ... no matter what the world says."

Dela Torre says her phone died right after she wrote her Facebook post. But when she turned it on a few hours later, she was "completely overwhelmed" by the positive reception. "It makes me feel so privileged that I've reminded at least one person of their worth and that no matter what skin condition, they don't have to hide," she says. "Today, I'm wearing a dress again. In public. All marks exposed."