



## Glaucoma Patient Kelly Mercieca Is Living Life to the Full

Although she had no known family history of glaucoma, Kelly Mercieca was diagnosed with congenital glaucoma at five months old, after her mother insisted that something about her watery eyes didn't seem right.

Kelly, now 47, had surgery at just six months old to minimise the damage that occurred when her iris was stretched in the womb due to glaucoma. She now lives with full vision in her left eye and partial vision in her right eye thanks to ongoing support and guidance from her ophthalmologist.

"Since I was seven the focus of my treatment has been keeping my eyes comfortable by maintaining regular eye drops. This has been the main reason I haven't needed surgery since I was four months."

Kelly has faced challenges due to her affected sight but she hasn't let that get in the way of living her life. Kelly has always maintained that you need to live your life to the full every day by doing the things you love and following your dreams.

"My mum didn't stop me from playing sport – I played netball – and I was not held back from engaging in activities due to my impaired vision. My parents didn't treat me differently to my three other siblings. When I was a kid, I used to dream about driving! I got my Ls as soon as I could and my Ps without hesitation."

Kelly does not take her independence for granted and attributes her eye health today to constant adherence to a good diet and regular ophthalmology appointments.

"Every time I get my eyes tested at my ophthalmologist I feel nervous in case there has been changes that might affect my independence," she reveals. "But I am super determined and have confidence in my abilities. I know no matter what is thrown at me, I will still conquer."

Kelly's positive attitude to her congenital glaucoma diagnosis and life is infectious. She advises others with the condition to ensure they seek out support so they know they are not alone.

"Finding like-minded people to help you grieve, share and remain authentic around your feelings is important. It's particularly important around the loss of sight and how it has or will affect your life. You need to process and grieve, to allow you to live your life honestly and to its fullest potential."

Kelly hopes Glaucoma Australia's new fundraising initiative, the **7 Sights in 7 Days Challenge**, will encourage Australians to place a higher value on their sight and help end glaucoma blindness this World Glaucoma Week (6-12 March 2022).

The **7 Sights in 7 Days Challenge**, part of Glaucoma Australia's annual Treat Your Eyes campaign, is asking Australians to capture a series of photos of everyday moments in their local surroundings to remind them that sight is precious while raising much-needed funds for early detection programs and critical support services.

"I hope people make the time to go and get their eyes checked. Thanks to my regular eye exams, and my very determined mother, I have been able to live my life to its fullest. I am grateful for my sight and the extraordinary experiences my sight has given me," Kelly added.

To find out more about you can be involved in **7 Sights in 7 Days Challenge** go to: [www.sevensights.org.au](http://www.sevensights.org.au)

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