



Jesseca Voorhies

My fitness journey began in 2006 when we were stationed at Fort Benning and I met Roland Huff, IFBB Pro and Personal Trainer. He is one of the kindest people I know. I had a two year old, baby weight to still lose, and a husband deployed to a combat zone... I needed help! He and his wife Shirley became like a second family to me.

When I was twenty-four I was diagnosed with Polycystic Kidney Disease. It is a genetic disease where fluid filled cysts cover the kidneys and eventually take over all of the good tissue of the kidney. When that happens, your kidneys fail. In January of 2019 my kidney functions dropped to 20% and I started the process to get on the donor list. I finished all of the testing and was on the list by June of 2019. We put the call out for donors. People responded and got tested. Friends and family got tested, but most of all, our military family stepped up and got tested. My donor was a friend that I met while we were stationed in Carlisle, Pennsylvania at the Army War College. She had moved to Georgia, so when we found out we were moving to Georgia to be stationed, we were so happy we would be reunited. Little did we know at the time, I would need a kidney and she would be the one to provide it.

On November 15, 2019 I received a living kidney donation. I was able to return to my trainer, Roland Huff, eight weeks after my surgery. It was eye opening! We started with the lightest bands and the lightest weights in his studio. I was so much weaker, but we knew it was a process and the body always remembers. One year later, I can push 405lbs on the leg sled and could not be happier.

Making sure I get the proper vitamins and minerals is critical as my anti-rejection medication can flush them out of my body to low levels. I eat lean protein, lots of vegetables and fruit, plus whole grains. I try and avoid processed food whenever possible, keep sodium levels low and I drink at least a gallon of water a day to constantly push water through my new kidney.

Along the way I have discovered I have to give myself a little breathing room and realize recovery takes time. Taking medication to keep my kidney is going to affect the way my body reacts to both food and exercise. I am grateful and blessed to have always had such wonderful support from my husband and kids and they are very happy and relieved that I had a very generous donor and friend to give me my life back. My brother, who also lives in Georgia, received a kidney in August of 2018. Like any good brother, he showed me it was possible. He and his family were a tremendous support.

It is never easy to start from scratch after a major surgery, but it is worth it. In my case, someone selflessly gave of themselves by giving me one of their kidneys. I try to honor that gift everyday by taking care of myself. My objective is to simply regain strength and endurance. I am getting there. One day at a time.

My advice to anyone is to know your numbers. Make sure you have a yearly physical and know your kidney function, blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugars... everything! Even if you do not have a genetic disease, like I do, take care of your insides. Listen to your doctor and be a compliant patient. Also, move your body. It was made to move. One last thing, be an organ donor!

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