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## Feature: Student battles with sickness

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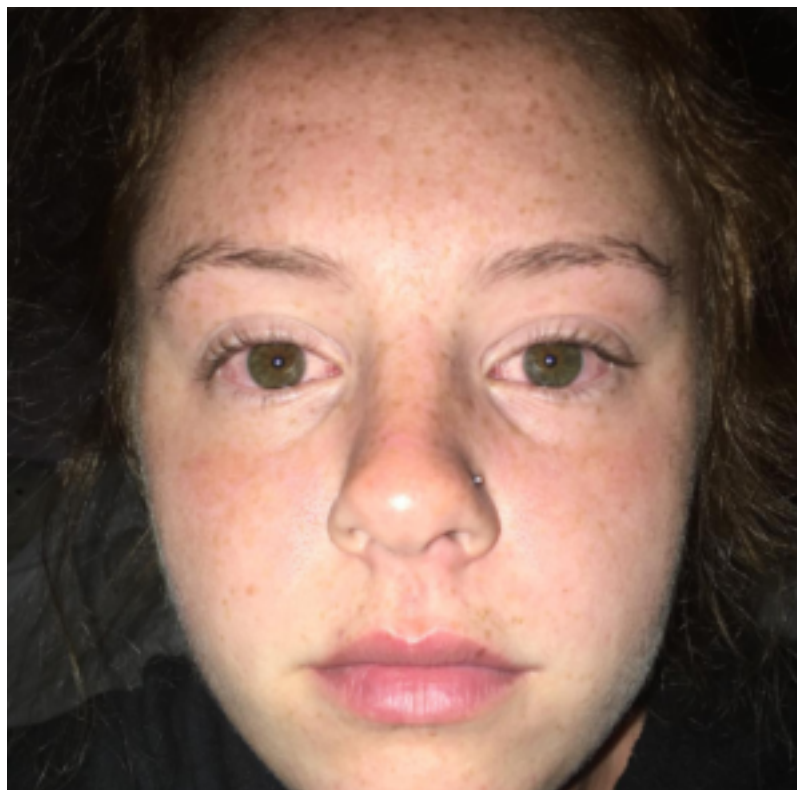
Until now, 19 year old Brittany Begos never had an issue with her health.

Over the 4<sup>th</sup> of July holiday she traveled to Block Island with her boyfriend and his family. A day after her return she went to the doctor with symptoms of a severe cold. Her doctor said she had strep and gave her medication to treat it. A week later, with no changes and unable to hold down food, she returned to the doctor, unsure of what would happen. He wrote her a script for blood work.

It showed she had mononucleosis along with strep throat. Still on medication for the strep, she was told to rest to relieve her symptoms. Two weeks passed and her condition grew worse. Despite Begos's concerns, her doctor refused to run different tests because mono takes time to get rid of. "I didn't know whether or not to believe him [the doctor] because he wasn't trying to help. He wouldn't listen," said Begos.

By the beginning of September, she was vomiting more than once a week and had lost 25 pounds. Shocked by the weight loss, her doctor began to run more tests. She was tested for her white blood cell count, along with Lyme disease and autoimmune deficiencies. The blood work came back normal for the third time.

Begos attempted to continue on normally with her daily routine. She was temporarily let go from her part time job of three years after having to call out once. She dropped one of her classes and had only gone to school six times since her semester began, despite being a full time student. Her boyfriend, Ken Peckham, had been with her every day. "It's difficult watching her go through something like this and knowing I can't do anything to help," said Peckham.



(Photo: Brittany Begos)

Her symptoms became extreme and she started throwing up bile and urinating blood. More blood was taken for testing and showed two issues. Begos had severe inflammation throughout her whole body and her antinuclear antibodies levels were up. Doctors told her she had some sort of autoimmune disorder.

"They're still running tests," said Begos. "It's frustrating being told all these symptoms were from different viruses when I've never been this sick. The worrying and stress almost seemed to make me feel worse." Until the blood tests show results, the autoimmune disorder will remain unclear.