



Name
 Natalie Newman
Her dream
 To enjoy quality time with her wonderful mum

Help me & Mum **FORGET CANCER**

Just a year ago, pretty young Sydney policewoman Natalie Newman received a double blow which threatened her life and shattered her dreams of having a big family.

The first came when she learnt that the backache and tiredness doctors had put down to IVF drugs were really the sinister early warning signs of a fast-spreading cervical cancer.

Then, fresh from a radical hysterectomy that put an end to her plan for siblings for her daughter Emily, a scan and biopsy revealed Natalie also had advanced ovarian cancer.

Shell-shocked, she returned to the operating theatre to have her ovaries removed. It was the only way to stem the spread of the aggressive cancer known to claim the lives of 800 Australian women every year.

"I was feeling so sick on IVF treatment, which I'd started after my husband Rick and I failed to get pregnant again after Emily was born. I got sicker and sicker, until I couldn't stand up," Natalie recalls.

"One minute we were planning a big family and had our life mapped out; next minute I was being told I had two primary

cancers, and I was afraid I wouldn't see my little girl grow up."

As 10 to 15 per cent of the 1270 Australians diagnosed each year with ovarian cancer have a family history of the disease, Natalie's mum Kerrieanne, 50, decided to have her ovaries removed also, just in case.

Today, after a nightmare year of surgery, sickness and uncertainty, Natalie and her mum are dedicated to spreading awareness of ovarian cancer and its symptoms.

When we found out about Natalie through OvCa, the National Ovarian Cancer Network working with *Woman's Day* on our new ovarian cancer campaign, we decided to give the 29-year-old and her mum some extra special spoiling.

Enlisting the help of staff at the luxury Sofitel Hotel in Brisbane, our Make My Day team put Natalie and Kerrieanne on a plane to the Sunshine State's capital, where an unforgettable VIP weekend of shameless pampering and primping lay waiting.

"It was absolutely awesome," says Natalie,

who was given the red carpet treatment from the moment she and her school-teacher mum landed at Brisbane Airport.

"The bubbly was already on ice as we hopped into a chauffeur-driven stretch limo, sent by Sofitel for our own guided tour of the city sights before arriving at our hotel, where it just kept getting better," she says.

Staff at Sofitel Brisbane, which has recently undergone a \$10million revamp, had more treats in store as they ushered the pair into their deluxe suite, complete with two double beds, a stocked mini bar and amazing views of the city.

"We couldn't believe our bedrooms ... absolute luxury!" chuckles Natalie, who was soon enjoying canapés and pre-dinner drinks in Club Sofitel on the 30th floor, and taking in the impressive views of Brisbane's skyline.

Then it was off to be shaken and stirred in the hotel's stylish new Thyme restaurant and cocktail bar.

After breakfast the next day, Natalie and Kerrieanne were ready for some serious rest

'WE COULDN'T BELIEVE OUR BEDROOMS ... ABSOLUTE LUXURY!'



and relaxation in Stephanie's Spa Retreat, where they were lavished with the Exotic Sole Ritual treatment, which included hot stone therapy and a deluxe pedicure.

Then it was off for a wash and blow-dry at Interstyle Hair Studio, Sofitel. Owner Pieter Van Der Zant opened the salon specially for Natalie on the Sunday morning.

"We felt so spoilt," says Natalie, recalling how Pieter had willingly sacrificed his day off - despite having celebrated his son's 21st the night before - because he'd been so touched by her story.

Returning to Stephanie's Spa Retreat, the women were given a celebrity makeover, and by early afternoon they were back in Thyme restaurant, flaunting glamorous film-star looks over cocktails.

"It was absolutely wonderful," says Natalie. "It was a highlight for both of us and gave us a chance to really connect and enjoy each other's company after the nightmare of the last 12 months.

"It really was a fantastic weekend, and we felt really special. When you're sick, you lose all dignity and feel so helpless, so it was good

for Mum and me to be able to spend quality time together. Thank you, *Woman's Day*."

Now in remission, an optimistic Natalie is back at home with her family. Earlier this year, she addressed the Sydney launch of National Ovarian Cancer Awareness Week, supported by *Woman's Day*.

"Someone in Australia dies of ovarian cancer every 11 hours," says Natalie. "Because there's no early detection test for ovarian cancer, and so little is known about this silent killer, it is important that women are aware of the symptoms."

BY MEGAN NORRIS

PICTURES: DAVID MASON.

 To find out more about ovarian cancer, or support the not-for-profit group OvCa, call 1300 660 334 or visit www.ovca.org.au