

NO LIMITS

The magazine for young people with arthritis

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● Inside this issue

All lurved up...

Making the leap...

Activities on water...

Win some funky gear...

Dear Denise

Coming out of the cold

TV presenter, Jenni Falconer, has worked hard to get where she is and it hasn't always been easy. Jenni has Raynaud's syndrome, a painful condition affecting the extremities – usually the hands and feet.

Juliet Stephens finds out more...

Scots lass Jenni first sprung onto our screens as a contestant on the dating show *Blind Date* during her first term at Leeds University. She's continued to be top TV totty since then, and has successfully pursued her media career, presenting a range of TV programmes. *Scotland on Sunday* newspaper readers voted her most eligible female in 2003, and Justin Timberlake

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famously gave her his number on air. Luckily for Cameron Diaz, blushing Jenni had a boyfriend at the time so turned him down.

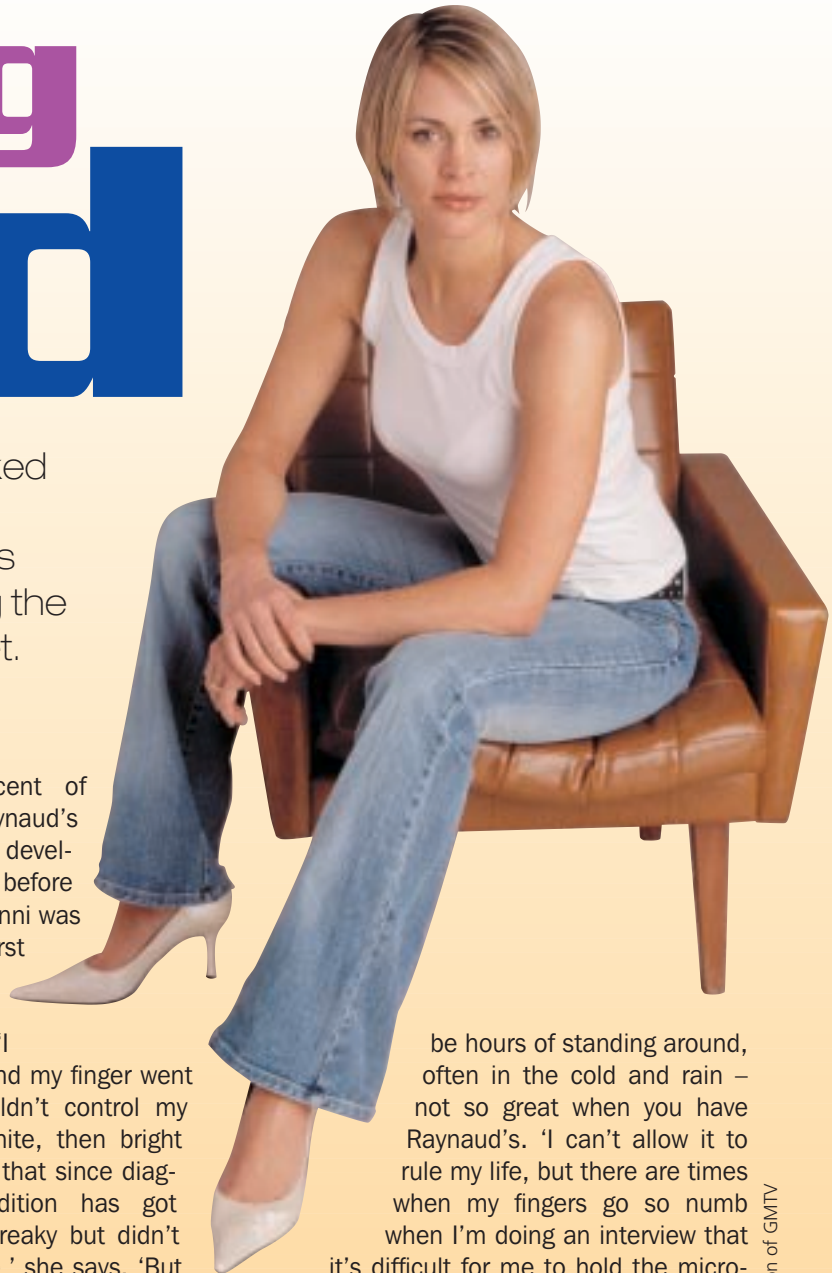
Raynaud's syndrome is due to poor circulation and affects five per cent of the UK population. Jenni has primary Raynaud's. For reasons which are unclear, the blood supply to the fingers and toes is reduced, especially in the cold when this happens more quickly than normal.

Ninety per cent of people with Raynaud's are female, and develop the condition before they are 25 – Jenni was 16 when she first noticed symptoms. She told

Now magazine: 'I was at school and my finger went so numb I couldn't control my pen. It went white, then bright red.' Jenni says that since diagnosis her condition has got worse. 'It was freaky but didn't really bother me,' she says. 'But now my feet can get so numb they feel like china and could shatter if I walk on them. When the blood starts flowing again it's like someone is stabbing me with cocktail sticks.'

Since 2000, Jenni has been dazzling the nation as *GMTV*'s alluring Entertainment Today presenter. This has given her the opportunity to interview A-list stars like Ben Affleck, Matt Damon, Pierce Brosnan and Jennifer Lopez.

Yakking to hot celebs on the red carpet might look glamorous, but the reality can



be hours of standing around, often in the cold and rain – not so great when you have Raynaud's. 'I can't allow it to rule my life, but there are times when my fingers go so numb when I'm doing an interview that it's difficult for me to hold the microphone,' she admits.

There is no cure for Raynaud's, so prevention is crucial. Wearing warm clothes, avoiding being barefoot, and keeping the extremities warm are practical solutions that don't involve moving to a warmer climate. Jenni says that she takes heat pads whenever she goes somewhere cold, and jokes that she gets some great Christmas presents. 'Last year I got socks that heat up, lavender-scented pocket heaters, pillows that heat up, hot water bottles. I love them all,' she laughs. ■

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