

Nothing

will hold me back now



Brave Nicole's determined to live life to the full

Nicole Wilson, 19, nearly died of meningitis – but she's rebuilt her life

As she strides confidently on her prosthetic legs, Nicole Wilson is determined to prove her life hasn't been wrecked by meningitis.

The disease robbed the teenager of both her legs, most of her fingers and the sight in one eye. The damage to her ovaries means she'll never have children of her own.

But Nicole, 19, refuses to feel sorry for herself. 'I used to love dancing and I'm determined to do it again,' she says.

Nicole's nightmare started when she was on holiday in Cyprus in June 2008. One night, Nicole woke up feeling terrible. 'I was really hot, clammy and confused,' she remembers. 'But I thought it was just a virus.'

Soon, she was in terrible pain. 'I tried screaming for

help but I could hardly breathe. I was vomiting, the pain in my legs and stomach was unbearable and there were black spots on my legs. The last thing I can remember was falling to the floor.' She was rushed to hospital where doctors diagnosed meningococcal septicaemia. She had just a 20 per cent chance of surviving.

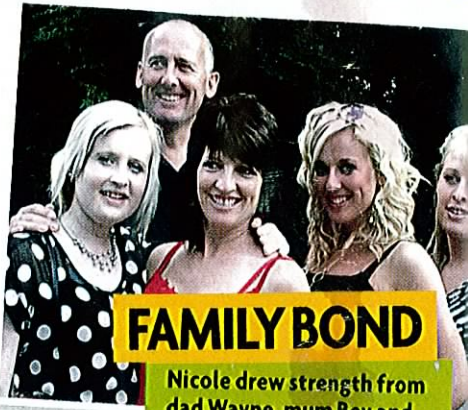
Her mum, Bev, and dad, Wayne, both 49, and older sister Stacey, 23, flew to be with her. 'My dad says he didn't recognise me,' Nicole says. 'I was all puffed up with charcoal black skin.'

For the next 12 days she remained in a coma. Her parents held a vigil by her bedside until, miraculously, she came around. 'I didn't know where I was,' she says.

Nicole was flown back to the UK and taken to Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge, near her home in the village of Sutton. There, she had a collapsed lung, kidney failure and her legs had to be amputated below the knee.

'I thought it was the end of my life,' she says.

Nicole was finally allowed home in March 2009. 'My dad had to carry



FAMILY BOND

Nicole drew strength from dad Wayne, mum Bev and sisters Stacey and Carly

me upstairs to bed,' she says.

But Nicole was determined to get her life back on track. By May 2009 she'd started walking with prosthetic legs. She passed her driving test in July 2010 and that month she also started training to be a beautician – her dream job. And through it all, her boyfriend Micky, 20, has been at her side.

Now Nicole is working hard to raise awareness of meningitis. 'I'm lucky to be alive,' she says. 'Each day is a gift.'

● **Nicole's trying to raise £36,000 through the Nicole Wilson Trust Fund to buy new prosthetic legs. To help, email bwilson042@aol.com**



HER BIG FIGHT

Nicole during her struggle against the disease

What to look for

Symptoms of meningitis can appear in any order – and not everyone will get all of them.

- A severe headache
- A stiff neck
- Vomiting
- Joint or muscle pain
- Aversion to bright lights
- A rash that looks like pin pricks
- Call 0808 800 3344 or go to www.meningitisUK.org for more information