

## TURNING POINT | TRACI MACCOUX

## With RSD, part of the pain is being misunderstood

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awareness of RSD through a national organization, For Grace ([www.forgrace.org](http://www.forgrace.org)).

Traci Maccoux of Brooklyn Park started swimming at age 7. In 2001, Maccoux, then in sixth grade, broke her toe at a swim meet. A month later, she came down with a burning pain in her leg. At times, it turned purple and became very cold. She was diagnosed with reflex sympathetic dystrophy, a neurological disease triggered by trauma to the body and marked by constant, severe, burning pain. Now 14, Traci has endured numerous relapses and remissions. At the moment, the ninth-grader is doing well and swims for the Wayzata High School varsity team. She also helps spread

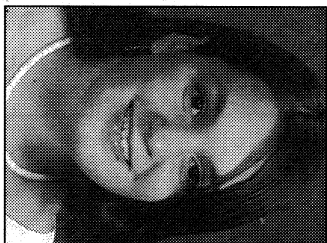
ting your finger cut off. It feels like your leg's on fire.

"We've tried epidurals. We've tried Bier blocks (a numbing technique). We've also tried sympathetic blocks. We've tried a ketamine drip twice. The first time, it was very helpful. I had side effects (flu-like symptoms), but it was better than being in pain. I was almost pain-free for three weeks.

"Some of the relapses are really quick. Some last for weeks, months. It can be caused by stress.

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"When I'm not in complete pain, I've been able to get in the water. Swimming is really good for RSD. You're supposed to



Traci Maccoux

"When I'm in a lot of pain, I'm usually in the hospital. My friends and family are a huge help. My close friends visit me in the hospital. I'm in special ed at school because I'm absent so much.

That helps a lot because teachers don't understand RSD either.

"It's difficult. When I come back from the hospital, everyone wants to know what happened. But no one really understands.

"When I'm not in complete pain, I've been able to get in the water. Swimming is really good for RSD. You're supposed to

keep the circulation moving. I swim the 50-free, 100-free, 200-free relay and 400-free relay.

"I do have to live life more carefully. I don't do gym. I use an elevator. I get out of class five minutes early. If I get tripped or hit or crash into a locker, it could set it off.

"In sixth grade, kids threatened to beat me up because they didn't believe me. I try to explain. For health projects, I'll do a poster on RSD for extra credit. Some people read them; some people don't.

"I want people to know that I'm not making it up."

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