Living in a small Western town and not knowing other people living with a chronic health condition, Jennifer Curtis was relieved to find connection and compassion through social media.

“[The Facebook page for the] National Psoriasis Foundation—reading other people’s stories—that has lifted my spirits so much,” says Curtis, 29. She was diagnosed with plaque psoriasis at age 20 and has recently begun experiencing some joint pain, though its cause has not yet been determined. She had only met one person with psoriasis in her town before she discovered the Facebook page. “It’s been amazing for me. It’s nice to know that I’m not in this completely alone.”

Sharing stories with other people living with psoriasis is important, Curtis says, because of the frustrating encounters she’s endured with people who don’t understand the disease. They’ve asked her lots of questions and even given her dirty looks, she explains. “People are ignorant about it—they think it’s just rash and you can make it go away.”

Curtis, who recently moved from Wyoming to Billings, Mont., has been in stores where people who see her skin during flare-ups refuse to use the same pen she’s used. “I’ve had teenage and young girls say, ‘Oh gross, look at her arm.’ It can be hurtful.”

Curtis is grateful for a loving support system at home. She and her husband, Nels, have two boys, Declan, 6, and Liam, 4. The couple hopes to have another child in the near future.

Curtis says her family is “awesome” when it comes to her psoriasis. When she first told her husband about having the disease, his response was, “So? That’s not a big deal.” It left her without a doubt that “he was the one I wanted to marry.”

Curtis is committed to staying on top of her health. From the time she was diagnosed, she was determined to learn as much as she could about psoriasis. She is thankful to have found a physician who listens to her and understands the effects psoriasis has on quality of life. She would like to see more doctors be as understanding as hers is. “If there’s a way we can get doctors to be more informed ... I went through some pretty painful procedures 10 years ago, before we knew what it was.”

For other people with psoriasis going through what she has, Curtis offers this advice: “Research it. Learn as much as you can. The more you learn about it, the better your understanding.”