Botox gives Chey-Anne more normal life

- Marianne Betts
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Chey-Anne Ellsum has had botox injections under her armpits to stop her severe sweating condition. Picture: Ellen Smith *Source:* Herald Sun

TEENAGER Chey-Anne Ellsum can hold her boyfriend's hand and hug loved ones after being treated for a debilitating medical condition.

The 17-year-old's life has been turned around after her grandparents stepped in to fund Botox injections to stop her severe sweating, a condition called hyperhidrosis.

Now the Bairnsdale schoolgirl is bravely taking on Health Minister Nicola Roxon for refusing to publicly fund the injections, after dismissing her condition as "not life-threatening".

It is one of seven drugs Ms Roxon has deferred funding on the Pharmaceuticals Benefits Scheme, and the only one for which no alternative treatment is available.

Miss Ellsum and her mother, Elizabeth Trapani, are taking their fight all the way to Canberra to help thousands of Australians with the condition who can't afford the treatment.

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"It's terrible to think I'm getting this when there are people out there suffering because they can't afford it. Not everyone has grandparents like me," Miss Ellsum said.

She has been cruelly taunted and bullied at school, knocked back on jobs, suffered depression, and been forced to wear several layers, even in the summer, to hide the sweat stains.

Ms Trapani said her daughter's condition, which had no known cause or cure, was "life-altering in the extreme".

"Chey-Anne could shower and scrub and by the time she'd towelled off, she'd smell like she'd been doing a full training run with a footy team," Ms Trapani said.

Miss Ellsum said: "It really controlled my life, but it's like a rock has been lifted off my shoulders, I can be a normal kid.

"My boyfriend and I have grown a lot closer, we've been together for a year and a half ... now for the first time I'll hold his hand for a whole day, and I'll hug my friends."

She had 30 botox injections in each armpit, at $2700, which would stop her sweating for six to 18 months. She was also using an experimental lotion, which cost $170 for 20ml, and lasted a month.

Miss Ellsum developed severely sweaty feet and hands at three, and by 13 it also affected her armpits.

Skin and Cancer Foundation Victoria head of surgery Assoc Prof Greg Goodman said: "It's a completely disabling disease. It's not the trifling little problem Nicola Roxon thinks it is."

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