

Exercise cure saves teen dangerous spinal surgery

BY MEL FAIRHURST

A HIGHLAND teenager says she has avoided undergoing dangerous lifesaving spinal surgery by doing simple exercises.

Laila Shah, 18, has been given a special muscle workout to help correct a painful condition called scoliosis, which causes the spine to curve.

The former pupil at Millburn Academy, Inverness, was 16 when she noticed a lump developing near her ribs on the right side of her body.

The teenager's condition deteriorated as her back became more and more contorted.

Laila was then told by doctors at Raigmore Hospital, Inverness, that she could die if she did not undergo a 10-hour operation to prevent her spine crushing her internal organs.

The spinal fusion surgery involved inserting two metal rods on either side of the spine to correct the back position and fuse the bones together.

Patients can die on the operating table, while other risks include paralysis, nerve damage and infection.

Laila's mother, Sameena, said she saw her active, bubbly daughter become withdrawn, especially as Laila was forced to miss the first term at Birmingham University where she had hoped to train as a dentist.

Mrs Shah said: "Seeing my daughter so frightened was horrendous, especially as I was just as anxious. I felt backed into a corner as I had been told that without surgery my daughter could die and the associated risks were also sky-high."

Mrs Shah went on the internet and found an alternative to drastic surgery at the Scoliosis SOS Clinic in

London. At the clinic last month, consultants found Laila had three curves in her spine.

Over the past four weeks, Laila has undergone an intensive physiotherapy and exercise regime and says she has experienced a transformation.

Her posture has improved, her back is straighter and her condition has stabilised – meaning she does not need to undergo the spinal operation. Her lung capacity has increased and she no longer has back pain.

She should be able to maintain her condition if she continues with daily exercises and she will return to the

“I am desperate to raise awareness of the condition and the treatment options”

clinic for a check-up in six months' time.

Now the teenager is looking forward to taking up her university place this September.

Laila said: "I am so happy with the cosmetic changes in my back. I lost all my self-esteem when I was diagnosed with scoliosis and felt everyone would stare at me – but now I am confident that I am standing much taller."

Mrs Shah said she was "overjoyed" her daughter was able to avoid drastic surgery, but she added: "I am disgusted that no one told me about the clinic. I am desperate to raise awareness of the condition and the treatment options available to save other teenagers from the operating table."

A spokeswoman from Raigmore Hospital said they were delighted that Laila's condition had improved, but they are unable to comment on individual patients.



NEW OPTION: Laila Shah has been spared a hazardous ordeal

A spokeswoman for the Scoliosis Association UK said the charity would always advise patients to follow specialist advice but that some patients can benefit from other treatments.

She said: "In mild curvatures, intensive exercise can improve posture, muscle strength, flexibility, and appearance, but there is no long-term evidence that it will ultimately

prevent the progression of a curve.

"The dangers of surgery are overstated.

"Serious complications are actually very rare indeed."