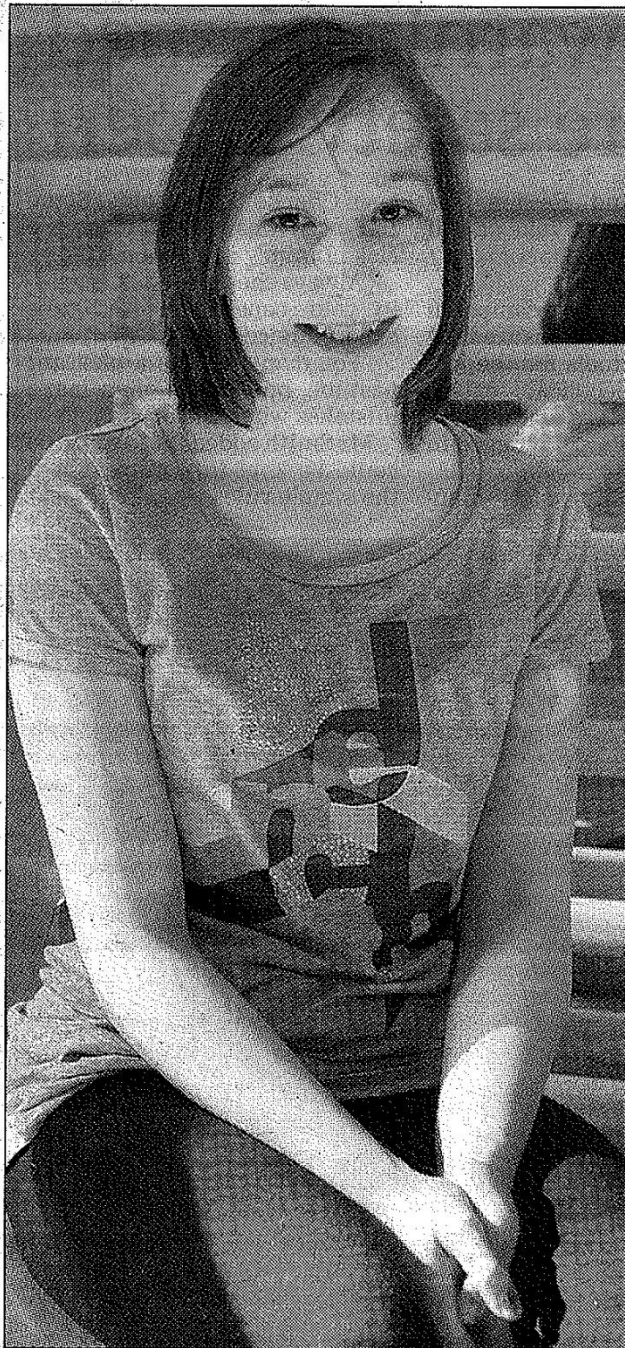


Liana's back on road to recovery

LEFT untreated, scoliosis can severely limit movement and even cause permanent damage to internal organs. But Liana Rowlinson, who found out she had the spinal condition less than seven months ago, is now living a normal, pain-free life thanks to a course of specialised physiotherapy. Reporter Eleanor Jones and photographer Phil Medgett met the 12-year-old and her family at their Hythe home.



SCOLIOSIS is a condition which causes the spine to curve. For some youngsters, the condition corrects itself as they grow, while others have to wear a back brace. Some need major surgery, involving the inserting of metal rods into the back.

But gymnast Liana Rowlinson shows no sign of anything out-of-the-ordinary. The Folkestone Grammar School for Girls pupil's back seems no different to her twin sister Cally's.

Liana spent four weeks at the Scoliosis SOS clinic in Suffolk and now has to complete daily specialised exercises in an adapted mini-gym at home – but she is just happy to be pain-free and confident about the future.

She said: "At the end of the course of treatment, I knew I could do anything.

"The physiotherapist said if anything starts hurting, I might need to do some hanging

exercises to align myself again but because I know what it should feel like, I'll know what I'm aiming for.

"I will have to exercise every day for ever but it means I can do so much more than I could before."

Liana first noticed something was wrong in October 2010, when performing cartwheels caused a pain low down in her back.

Worried mother Helen, 44, took the then 11-year-old to the doctor and then an osteopath, who recommended an X-ray of the area. This resulted in the diagnosis of scoliosis.

Helen said: "My reaction was panic. The condition's in my family so I knew that it can get worse very quickly, so you have to take immediate action.

"So I just said, 'I'm going to do something about it'."

Research on the internet led the family to the Scoliosis SOS clinic, and after a

preliminary consultation, Liana was booked in for her four-week course.

She said: "It was really hard at the start. It's six hours of exercises, five days a week, and I did get tired.

"But it wasn't intensive, it was all about building up core muscles and improving posture. One side of my body was lazy and because I was so active, the other side was compensating. So I had to learn to strengthen the weak side without weakening the other.

"It was hard work but within a week, there was no pain.

"All I was thinking about was stopping it getting worse – but instead, I got better."

Liana was taught how to improve her posture and combat her tendency to compensate for the curve. She also learned "rotational breathing", which helps the body re-align.

And, thanks to the

treatment, the 12-year-old is now almost fully recovered.

Helen said: "Because we caught it and acted so early, she's pretty much cured now. At the end of last year, she couldn't do the things she used to because it hurt too much – it was ruining her life.

"The clinic has been absolutely fantastic. It's not magic, just specialised physiotherapy, but she knows exactly what's going on and why the exercises do her good, which really helps.

"I'm so relieved and so grateful there's someone out there with an alternative to the other horrible options."

Liana added: "I used to get up and dance when Cally did and I'd have to stop because it hurt – but now, I can take her on. And, because of my posture, I was 1.5cm taller by the end of the treatment. I went in shorter than my sister but came back slightly taller – that was great."

Better: Liana is now almost fully cured, thanks to the scoliosis clinic

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