

I'm making a splash again after 15 years



PIONEERING: Liz Robinson, 35, has undergone pioneering alternative therapy.

Swimmer fights back from 'devastating' spine condition

A FORMER competitive swimmer, who was forced to give up her hobby because of a "painful and exhausting" spinal condition, has splashed back into the pool after pioneering alternative therapy.

Liz Robinson, 35, of Beverley Crescent, Grimsby, was "devastated" when she was diagnosed with scoliosis, a condition causing her spine to rapidly curve to the right, just before her 15th birthday.

She was warned that if the condition worsened, she would have no option but to undergo a painful nine-hour operation involving the insertion of metal rods in her spine.

Fearing she may end up in a wheelchair, Liz began researching her condition and discovered a clinic in London which offers non-surgical procedures to scoliosis sufferers.

She said: "I was in the swimming pool when my friend first told me that my back looked like it was curving to one side.

"I can remember thinking 'what have I done.' I remember asking mum to have a look for me and her face said it all.

"We made an appointment to see the doctor who confirmed that there was a serious problem with my back.

"Very soon after that I was diagnosed with scoliosis and

by **Laura Stuart-Cook**

laura.stuart-cook@gsmg.co.uk

from then on everything really changed.

"Suffering from pain on a daily basis was exhausting. Swimming was my life when I was younger so when the pain started stopping me from swimming I knew that I had to do something about it.

"Finding alternative treatment was not easy, everyone I spoke to told me that I needed to have spinal fusion surgery.

"I can remember feeling

absolutely devastated and being constantly worried about what was going to happen if I kept ignoring the problem.

"I knew that I did not want to have surgery as the risks involved were awful.

"I am also terrified of hospitals and the idea of having metal fitted down my back was not appealing."

Liz, who was born in Wales and later relocated to Grimsby, worked as a cashier at The Royal Bank of Scotland before being forced to give up work because of her condition.

After reading about the Scoliosis SOS clinic in a magazine, she contacted them and was enrolled on a four-week course, where she learnt a combination of exercises to help her condition and underwent a range of non-surgical treatments.

She said: "I remember feeling like I had nowhere to turn so when I found the clinic I was ecstatic. I was so relieved to find somewhere that was prepared to help me.

"The exercises I learnt at the centre have changed my world. By the end of the course I looked and I felt like a different person.

"I now do half-an-hour of exercises each day, which are designed for me at the clinic to keep the pain at bay and avoid the spinal fusion surgery in the future.

"I have been able to return to swimming after almost 15 years or being unable to exercise and I feel so much healthier.

"The last few years were extremely scary – being in so much pain that you think you will end up in a wheelchair is terrifying.

"I really feel like I have been given another chance.

"Nobody can appreciate how good it feels to have your flexibility back unless you have lived without it."

Since undergoing the treatment, Liz is now able to swim up to four days a week at Grimsby Leisure Centre.

Scoliosis is more common in girls

WHAT is scoliosis?

- Scoliosis is an abnormal curvature of the spine to one side.

- The curvature in the spine can vary from being slight to severe.

- The bend can occur at any point along the spine, from the top to the bottom.

However, the most common regions to be affected by scoliosis are the chest area and the lower part of the back.

- In about 80 per cent of scoliosis cases, the cause is unknown.

- In the UK, scoliosis affects three to four children out of every 1,000.

- The condition can develop at any time during childhood and adolescence.

- Scoliosis is more common in girls than boys and often occurs at the start of adolescence.

- Treatment is not required in about 90 per cent of cases of scoliosis because the condition corrects itself as the child grows.

- Most of the remaining ten per cent of cases can be successfully treated using a back brace to prevent further curvature.

- About three out of every 1,000 children with scoliosis will need surgical treatment.