

How I beat my spine agony

By **PETER KAY**

A SHEFFIELD nurse has described how she was given “a new lease of life” as a result of treatment for a spine condition that once threatened a life of pain and discomfort.

Rebecca Haines, who was told as a child that her spine was rapidly curving to the right, eventually turned to a non-surgical technique after deciding against spinal fusion surgery.

Now 53, she said it had improved her posture and reduced her pain.

She was 11 when she and her family were told she had a condition called scoliosis and that she would need to have an operation as soon as possible. The procedure involved having metal rods being inserted either side of the spine, before the spine is fused solid, and was described as being as risky as open heart surgery.

After endless X-rays and appointments with specialists, Rebecca and her family rejected the advice of a consultant and used physiotherapy to alleviate the pain.

Although this was helpful for a number of years, by the time Rebecca reached her 20s her posture was starting to deteriorate.

Training to become an orthopaedic nurse, she saw numerous patients undergo scoliosis operations.

“One of them was a child aged 11. He had undergone spinal fusion surgery. However, complications occurred during the surgery and the metal rods were removed immediately. The poor child was left paralysed in both legs.” Rebecca, who lives in Cherry Tree Road, Nether Edge, said she knew that she had been right to avoid surgery.

Yet as she got older, the pain became more intense. She was spending up to ten hours a day on her feet, lifting patients, and this was taking its toll on her spine.

She started doing exercise classes, including yoga and pilates, which helped, but only in the short term.

Then she came across Scoliosis SOS, a clinic founded and run by Erika Maude, who has scoliosis herself, and which offers non-surgical treatments.



Rebecca Haines with her children Thomas and Lily

Rebecca, who works at Sheffield Children’s Hospital, booked an intensive four-week course of treatment in Suffolk, which, she said, led to a significant improvement in her posture and physical appearance and less pain.

She continues to do half an hour of exercises each day which were designed for her by her therapist.

“This treatment has really changed my life for the better. Seeing that little boy lose the use of his legs so early in my ca-

reer was always the reason I kept rejecting the option of having surgery. I feel like I have been given a new lease of life. I have made some fantastic friends and we have all been able to support each other.

“I am looking forward to getting back to work and working to the standard I used to work at before my spine started causing me so many problems.”

Online NHS Choices says scoliosis affects three to four children out of every 1,000. Treatment is not required in about

90% of cases because the condition corrects itself as the child grows.

Most of the remaining 10% 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.

Left untreated, the curvature of the spine can get worse and cause damage to the spine, chest, pelvis, heart and lungs

● www.scoliosissos.com

● www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Scoliosis