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Sisters battle serious spine conditions without surgery

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A PAIR of sisters from Bradley Stoke have managed to overcome a debilitating spine condition without needing painful surgery.

Rachel and Rebekah Manning were both physically active teenagers, enjoying swimming, football and athletics, when they started to suffer from severe back pain.

They were diagnosed with scoliosis – a condition which causes the spine to curve – and told that they may have to go a nine hour operation to correct it.

Rachel, 21, who works as a trainee accountant, said: "I've always noticed that I was a bit asymmetrical. I had one hip bigger than the other when I was 11 years old but I thought that I was normal really.

"I was active but whenever I did exercise I used to get really bad pains in my back.

"When I went to university I studied physiotherapy for a year and when I started to learn about the body, I realised what was happening to my spine. I also diagnosed my sister and we've since discovered my mum has it too."

Left untreated scoliosis can lead to fatal heart and lung problems. The most usual treatment is an operation which involves metal rods being inserted either side of the spine, before the spine is fused solid.

After endless X-rays and appointments with various specialists, Rebekah was told that she

would need surgery as soon as possible. Rachel was told that although her spine had stopped curving, it could get worse in the future, and she was still in severe pain.

Both girls were terrified.

Rebekah, 17, started to suffer from confidence issues and found concentrating at school very difficult due to the pain she was in when sitting for prolonged periods of time.

While researching other options to reduce the pain they were in, their father John Manning found Scoliosis SOS – a non-surgical clinic.

Founded and run by Erika Maude, who has scoliosis herself, the clinic opened five years ago and has since brought relief to hundreds of sufferers.

Rachel said: "We had a consultation and we underwent a very intensive course of physiotherapy. It was amazing. We had to do exercises to strengthen the muscles either side of the spine and learn how to hold ourselves straight. I wasn't ever sceptical about the treatment but I never believed it would have the impact it did.

"I grew 1.5 cm taller while I was there and we saw the 'before' and 'after' photos of our spines. The difference was incredible. I've not had very much pain at all and Rebekah has managed to stabilise her curve.

Rebekah said: "If it's the choice between being cut open and exercising I know which one I would choose."

For more information visit www.scoliosissos.com.



'Amazing': Sisters Rebekah, left, and Rachel Manning; and on the left, photographs showing Rebekah's back before and after treatment

Photograph: Steve Roberts