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# Climber recovers to lead high life

A ROCK climbing teenager from Sheffield is scaling the heights once more - after life-saving treatment for a potentially-fatal spinal condition.

Timothy Carter, aged 17, was an energetic and active young boy with a passion for rock climbing until he was diagnosed with scoliosis in October last year.

He had started to suffer from excruciating back pain and had been told his condition was so serious he would need to undergo major spinal fusion surgery immediately.

Timothy said: "Finding out I had scoliosis was life-changing.

"I am passionate about rock climbing and I knew if I had my spine fused I would never be able to move properly again. I knew I would lose my flexibility and that it would take me at least a year to recover from the operation."

Scoliosis, which causes the spine to curve and can eventually crush vital internal or-

gans, affects around four per cent of the population.

Timothy said: "Sitting on the sidelines watching my friends having fun was soul-destroying."

The condition's standard treatment is to fit a patient with a back brace for at least four years, or to carry out a major operation which bears greater risks even than open heart surgery.

After being diagnosed Timothy was told he was too old for a back brace and that he would be put straight on the list for surgery.

Desperate to find an alternative, Timothy's parents came across a clinic called Scoliosis SOS, which was founded by sufferer Erika Maude. It allows sufferers to recover through exercise rather than surgery.

Timothy said: "When my parents told me about the treatment I was ecstatic. I love keeping active and climbing at any opportunity I have,



**On the way back up:** Timothy is climbing again after battling a potentially fatal spinal condition.

so doing exercises to keep my back in good condition and to avoid surgery was not a problem.

"Once I started to read about what the exercises involved and how they worked I was even more excited. For the first time since my diagnosis, I could see an end to all the back pain I was suffering. It was also amazing to believe

that, even though my spine was curving, I could prevent it getting worse."

Timothy avoided surgery and has now gone back to playing sports three times a week.

He said: "Last year I missed out on so much, including a seven-day climbing trip. This year I have my tickets booked and can't wait to go."