

Feel Good You

30-DAY ENERGY DIET

LOSE 7lb

Fix your metabolism

75 NEW YEAR HEALTH UPGRADES

- ✓ Be happy
- ✓ Stay well
- ✓ Beat pain

TONE YOUR TUM IN 10

Get your waist back

Your best year **STARTS HERE!**

How to get the life YOU want in 2021

SUPERFOOD RECIPES TO BOOST BODY AND MIND

NATURE CALLS
The latest pill-free health cures

Great hair EVERY DAY
EXPERT TIPS FOR ULTIMATE BOUNCE

'I lived with back pain FOR OVER 30 YEARS'

Chantal Cooke, 52, couldn't imagine a pain-free future – but then she found relief

When I was 19, I hurt myself doing what I thought was a simple exercise. I was stretching out, trying to put my head to my knees. When I couldn't quite reach, I asked my friend to give me a push. I felt something in my back go 'twang' and was plagued with issues for years.

I didn't seek professional advice until my late 20s. I saw various osteopaths and although that would soothe the pain temporarily, it didn't tackle the root cause. I'd get it under control for a few months, and then my back would click out again.

At best, the pain was an irritating niggle. I could only sit for a short time and would have to get up and move around for relief. When my back was at its worst, I was doubled up and unable to stand straight. I remember bending over to get something while sitting down and finding myself seized up in the chair. One particularly excruciating time, I swung my leg over

to get off my bike and all the power and stability went in my back and I crumpled to the floor.

I couldn't bend over the sink to clean my teeth or wash dishes without putting a hand down. I didn't have the stability to hold my back in place at certain angles.

Losing confidence

I had a successful career in media but several years ago made the leap to move out of London to a smallholding in Wales – it came with 45 acres and seven pigs. I wanted to embrace my new, outdoorsy life and didn't want back issues to squash my dreams.

But it was a huge struggle some days. The weakness and the fear of pain made me question the simplest daily activities. I couldn't avoid everything physical, but I constantly second-guessed movements such as lifting or moving things around. I've always loved hiking but despite being physically fit enough, my back would start to hurt, signalling for me to stop.



Living with pain

I'd take anti-inflammatories and painkillers if it got severe, but would try to avoid them when possible.

Having a hot bath, using a hot water bottle and ice, and then stretching helped. Those self-care techniques served me at times when it was difficult to get treated.

It got to the point where I'd tried everything, but nothing offered permanent relief. The NHS is amazing for many things, but for chronic problems, it was a struggle to find a resolution. My experience when seeing a GP was just to be offered strong painkillers, which didn't solve the issue in the long term.

I saw more osteopaths, sports therapists, physiotherapists and personal trainers. I had massages and was clicked into place, and tried acupuncture – which helped somewhat to loosen my tight back muscles. I resigned myself to using a

combination of these treatments for the rest of my life.

Finding relief

Then, a colleague told me about IDD therapy – a private, non-surgical spinal decompression treatment. So I did my research and what caught my attention was that it claimed to deal with unresolved back pain, which was exactly my issue.

Luckily, I was in a position where I could afford to try. After the initial consultation at £80, the treatment would cost £100 per session. The number of sessions needed would depend on the individual, but I figured that the worst case scenario would be losing some time and money. So, just over a year ago, I booked an appointment. It was encouraging that I was asked probing questions about my pain with the intention of finding the cause.

I had a scan – again, done privately – and a few days later, I was back in the clinic. I was told that my pain and symptoms were absolutely consistent with my injury in the gym. After 30 years, I finally found out what was wrong with my back! The space between my vertebrae had narrowed meaning there was little cushioning. And because my discs were compressed, bony spurs were growing. I was told I probably wouldn't have had these problems if my injury was treated at the time. That was a big lesson. My treatment plan involved manual therapy and IDD therapy, which was really pleasant.

First, I had a massage. Then, I was strapped to what looks like a vertical bed that tilts back into a horizontal position. With my osteopath's input, the computer worked out my programme and for 15 minutes, I experienced a gentle pulling while being kept in position. It was a lovely, painless, stretching feeling.

After my first time, I felt six inches taller and like I was floating down the

NEED TO KNOW

It is estimated that 80% of us suffer from back pain at some point in our lives.

Pain in the lower back is the most common type of back pain.

Back pain can be caused by a slipped disc, sciatica, or an injury such as a strain or sprain. Sometimes the cause is unknown.

Intervertebral Disc Decompression or 'IDD Therapy' is the fastest-growing non-surgical spinal treatment for herniated or slipped discs.

Chantal received her treatment at the Spinex Disc Clinic (www.spinexdiscclinic.com).

street. Subsequent visits brought the same relief and I had several sessions before lockdown. I was given some stretches to do at home, which I've religiously kept up with. These take no more than 10 minutes and are so worth it.

Looking ahead

I'm due to have more IDD therapy soon. It's not possible to reverse the damage to my back but I am able to prevent the pain and stop it from getting worse. Even with a break in my treatment, I've noticed a huge improvement. Despite logging many miles of pig food around the farm, I haven't experienced any problems since – which is highly unusual for me. My confidence has soared because I've found a solution instead of suffering with no long-term options. I'm hopeful this therapy will help me stay active and pain-free and I'm no longer fearful that I'll be hobbling around in my 60s and 70s.

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