



ILL... Linda in 1989 after birth of first child Matthew

OCCUPATIONAL therapist Linda Horncastle was crippled by pain caused by fibromyalgia for nearly two decades. She even contemplated suicide to spare her family the burden of looking after her. Linda, from Seer Green, Bucks, says:

“I first fell ill aged 27, after the birth of my son Matthew. I saw a specialist who said it was a trapped nerve and gave me painkillers, but it didn't get any

better. The pain spread across to my other shoulder, down my back and I felt so utterly tired all the time.

Four years after Matthew was born I had my second son, Steven, by which time I couldn't lift either of them up. If they wanted a hug, they'd have to climb on to my knees. I was completely depend-

ent on my husband David, now 52, and friends to help me with the kids. I finally found out what was wrong with me when I was 33.

We were living in France and a GP referred me to a rheumatologist who said I had fibromyalgia.

He advised I visit some thermal baths and make

changes to my diet. But then David's job was transferred back to the UK and the stress of moving made my symptoms worse.

*I was housebound for days on end. I didn't have the energy to do the school run and I was in constant, agonising pain.*

My family was suffering so much because of me. David had to do all the cooking and housework. Normal things such as family holidays and

after-school clubs weren't an option for Matthew and Steven. I felt so guilty I twice contemplated suicide, thinking they'd all be better off without me. I'd lost almost all my friends because I couldn't leave the house. I had panic attacks whenever I went on public transport.

The turning point was reading an article by a physiotherapist who'd been simi-

**BETTER... Linda today**



## 'I twice thought about suicide'

larly debilitated by fibromyalgia. She explained how she had got her life back and even started work again with stretching exercises combined with cutting out sugar, caffeine and gluten from her diet.

I made all these changes and went to a pain clinic where I learnt relaxation techniques so I didn't burn

myself out. My symptoms improved by around 40 per cent, but I was still far from well again. A doctor suggested I try a device called an Alpha-Stim.

This uses a small electrical current to produce alpha waves which stop my brain getting more pain signals than it should. By the end of the second

week of using it I was feeling much better. I slept well for the first time in decades and my energy and pain levels improved.

I even started work again in 2010, which I never in a million years thought would happen.

● For more information see [ukfibromyalgia.com](http://ukfibromyalgia.com) and [meassociation.org.uk](http://meassociation.org.uk).