

Your Health

● Real-life stories ● Latest health news ● Expert advice

Bone was RUBBING on bone

One by one, Vicki's joints were seizing up...

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At 21 and expecting my first baby, I was getting used to my pregnancy symptoms. But none of the books said anything about achy red hands and wrists.

After my baby boy Ben was born I developed crippling pains, and rheumatoid arthritis was diagnosed. I felt like an old lady rather than a young woman. My fingers were becoming gnarled and I could hardly walk.

Although there were drugs I could take to help my condition, none worked for me.

Before my wedding at 22, I had to be given an infusion of steroids to keep the pain under control.

It was only a short-term fix, but it worked like magic. I felt like a princess and couldn't stop grinning at my lovely new husband Peter. I

Steroids helped me through my big day



The operation was painful but worth it

I felt like an old woman at 22



even managed to wear high heels.

But my condition was so aggressive that the following year, X-rays showed all my cartilage had eroded from the hip joint, so bone was rubbing against bone.

My consultant said I needed a hip replacement. It was a shock, but the operation really helped and I felt like a young woman again.

Even so, my hands were still crippled. I had to use big chunky brushes to apply make-up and ask Peter to straighten my hair for me.

Aged 25, my feet started to hurt when I walked barefoot. By 26, they were sticking out like a penguin's.

A year later, I couldn't move my feet from side to side without moving the whole leg. My ankle joints had eroded and collapsed.

My surgeon said I needed ankle fusion surgery – the three bones of

the ankle (the tibia, talus and fibula) had to be repositioned on both legs and screwed together.

He started with the left foot. It was a major operation that took almost five hours. The anaesthetist knew it would be extremely painful when I woke up, so she'd fitted me with an epidural drip to numb me from the waist down.

But in the middle of the night the drip fell out and none of the night staff was trained to replace it. It was the worst experience of my life.

Even so, I had no regrets about the surgery. It put my left foot back in perfect alignment with my knee. Though I couldn't move my foot side to side, it went up and down with no pain at all. I was thrilled.

Ben had turned seven by then. I'd been ill all his life. But I made sure he never missed out on anything.

Now I'm getting ready to have my right foot operated on. Then I'll be able to walk in comfort, and wear pretty shoes again. I can't wait!

● For more information, visit arthritisresearchuk.org.

WHAT'S THE NEWS?

Your weekly update

MS hope

Multiple sclerosis (MS) damages the protective layers covering cells in the brain and spinal cord. But scientists say they've made a breakthrough and found that blocking an enzyme in the brain helps the damage to repair. It's hoped this discovery will help drug development.

Full effect

Thick foods make us feel fuller faster, a new study reports. Volunteers tried different yogurts, all with the same flavour and calories. The verdict was they felt full more quickly eating yogurt with a thicker texture.



Stroke alarm

The Stroke Association says 10,000 strokes could be prevented each year if more of us called 999 after seeing these 'mini stroke' warning signs – facial drooping, inability to lift arms over the head and slurred speech. Find out more at stroke.org.uk.

DID YOU KNOW? Over 900 unborn babies a year will develop spina bifida. The charity Shine says if women took 400mcg of folic acid a day it would prevent 72 per cent of cases.



TURN OVER FOR MORE HEALTH



that's life!