

Behind the smile, Joanne was unhappy with her huge frame



**BEFORE**

# So fat, I got stuck in a sun lounger

Joanne Illingworth, 29, dreaded holidays. But these days she can wear her bikini with pride after shedding almost half her body weight...

Joanne used to be self-conscious about her figure on holiday – now she's confident in a bikini



**NOW**



She lost an amazing 9½st with her eating plan and is so proud of her new figure

when I was told it cost £10,000, I knew there was no way I could afford it. "What am I going to do?" I wept. The thought of not seeing Nadia grow up killed me.

Then, one day, I spotted an ad in the paper about a new weight-loss programme, Alizonne therapy. It required eating protein-rich packets of powder and having endermologie, where a vacuum-like device is moved across the body to keep the skin tight throughout the weight loss, and an ultrasound treatment to encourage the breakdown of fat. It cost £5000 – half the cost of surgery.

I called the Alizonne clinic in Leeds and signed up, determined to change my life. The following day, I stocked up on the powder, clearing the junk from my kitchen cupboards.

I tore open the first sachet, Egg Omelette, and mixed it with water. It expanded into a goo that I had to cook. It wasn't the best meal of my life, but I felt full afterwards. My cravings for snacks disappeared – I just wasn't hungry.

The Hot Chocolate powder tasted better – thick and creamy – and I virtually lived off the pizza- and pasta-flavoured sachets. I had to take vitamin and mineral tablets, and I could eat veg, too.

After just a few weeks, my jeans became looser and it was the encouragement I needed.

I had weekly endermologie and ultrasound treatment and, after five months, I'd lost 8st.

Then phase two began. I could now eat meat, as long as it was cooked healthily. It was glorious to chew on roast chicken again. Phase three came when I reached 11½st. I could introduce other foods into my diet, such as muesli and cereal with skimmed milk.

By May 2007 I'd lost 9½st – looking in the mirror, I was literally half the person that I used to be.

I loved my new figure. My confidence soared and I was full of energy, too. "You look amazing," friends would tell me.

But the best moment came when I slipped into a bikini on holiday in Portugal in May this year. And at last I could sit in any seat without having to worry about getting stuck.

round dumpling. Sometimes, in desperation, I'd starve myself for 24hrs. But the next day I'd pig out.

Because I lacked confidence, I always went for the wrong men. I was flattered by anyone who asked me out and often said yes because I was scared I couldn't get anyone else because of my size.

In 2000, I met David\* and we married two years later. I fell pregnant in September 2002, but only a few months after I gave birth to our daughter Nadia, in May 2003, David and I broke up.

I met Peter two years later through friends and things were going really well. But then came the crunch point. Peter and I went to Turkey last August. It was supposed to be a relaxing time, but I was worried I'd look like a beached whale by the pool.

On the flight I wasn't able to fit into my aeroplane seat and had to ask for a bigger seatbelt. Even worse, I got stuck in a sun-lounger while I was sunbathing.

Wrapped in a towel to hide the rolls of fat mushrooming out of my swimsuit, I squeezed myself in between the arm rests. Then, as I went to sit forward, I realised I couldn't move. The lounger had wedged

in my sides and Peter had to pull me out. Everyone stared and tears of embarrassment stung my eyes. "I'm so humiliated," I told him.

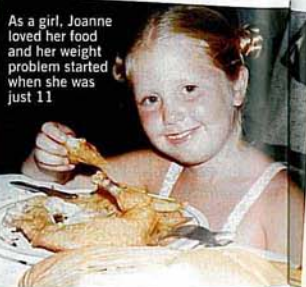
"Don't be silly," he said. "It could have happened to anyone." But I knew he was just being kind. For the rest of the holiday I didn't dare go out to sunbathe again.

Back home in Cleckheaton, West Yorkshire, I saw my GP. When he told me I was 21st and morbidly obese, I gasped.

I knew I had to do something. I had Nadia to think about – she needed her mum to be around.

A week after my holiday disaster I broke it off with Peter. He understood that I needed a new start with no distractions.

At first, I thought stomach stapling might be the answer, but



As a girl, Joanne loved her food and her weight problem started when she was just 11

**M**aking my way to the poolside, I sighed contentedly as I felt the sun on my face. "Hello, madam, can I get you anything?" the waiter asked. "No, thank you," I replied. "I'm just going to sunbathe."

I took off my sarong, showing off my new slimline figure, and lay down on a sun-lounger. It was hard to believe that only a few months ago I wouldn't have dared sit by the pool, let alone in a bikini. And as I remembered the last time I'd been away, I couldn't help but blush...

Last summer, I'd gone away with my boyfriend at the time, Peter\*. But I'd looked so different – I was 21st and everywhere I went people stared at my huge frame.

My weight problems had started when I was 11. I'd broken my leg and, laid up on the couch, began

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