

# 'Getting fit saved me from surgery'

After dropping five dress sizes through diet and exercise, Ruth Pashley no longer needs the breast reduction she was once so desperate for...

AS TOLD TO LIZ FROST



## Vital statistics

Age 28 Height 5ft 7in

Before weight 17st 7lb → After weight 11st 7lb

Size 22/24 → Size 12

jobs, which meant I was on my feet a lot more. Within a year, I was a size 18, but I didn't lose any weight from my chest, which made me feel even more out of proportion and self-conscious.

## A GROWING PROBLEM

'I met my husband Tony in April 2001 through mutual friends and he didn't seem to mind that I was carrying a few extra pounds. Despite Tony training regularly at the gym, we'd happily have cosy nights in watching TV and eating unhealthy ready-meals or processed food, so I soon put on all the weight I'd lost. By the time we got married in 2002, I was a size 22/24 and weighed over 17st. When I looked at the photos of our wedding I was really disappointed – I wished I'd slimmed down in time for the big day.

'As well as hating my size, I began getting backache due to my large bust – I really noticed it after sitting at a desk all day. That's when a friend of my mum suggested I have a breast reduction on the NHS.

When I turned 25, I went to see my doctor about the problem. He was sympathetic, but said he wouldn't recommend an operation because at 17st 5lb, I was too heavy to have a general anaesthetic. I knew he was right but it was still hard to hear.

'About that time, somebody showed me a photograph of my sister hugging me and I noticed that she couldn't get her arms around me because I was so big. That was the final straw – for the sake of my health and my self-confidence, I realised I had to lose

weight. I looked on the internet for a diet plan and ended up on the Slimming World website.

## D-DAY ARRIVES

'I was too self-conscious to go to the meetings at first – I thought everyone would gawp at me – so I followed the diet online. I remember being surprised at how

'I had to buy some of my jeans from men's shops as the women's sizes didn't fit'

'As a teenager, I was an average weight, but my generous 36C bust made me look out of proportion and left me feeling really self-conscious. Then I began to put on weight and I became the biggest out of any of my friends – by the time I was 18 I was a size 14/16 and my friends were all between a size 8 and 10.

'When I went to university my social life often revolved around alcohol – I'd drink pint after pint of cider, after which I'd eat a huge portion of chips covered in cheese. My weight started to creep up – along with my cup size.

At the end of my four-year degree, I was a size 22 and my bust was a enormous 40E. I felt unattractive and everywhere I went I thought people were staring at my chest. If a guy talked to me in a bar, he'd soon start looking at my breasts, not my face, and that really hurt my feelings.

'Clothes shopping made me feel self-conscious, too. You'd never catch me wearing a dress or skirt because I felt too awkward in them, so I bought jeans in every style and colour imaginable and lived in them. I had to buy some of them from men's shops because the women's sizes often didn't fit me.

'When I left university in 2000, I lost 2st practically straightaway, simply by eating less junk food and drinking less alcohol. I also got a couple of part-time

Photograph: Julie Fisher. Hair and make-up: Gina Anderson at Artistic Licence. Top, trousers and bag: Sweaty Betty (0800 1693889; www.sweatybetty.com). Trainers: Ruth's own



**Fitness**

'Try different sports until you find something you really love doing. That way exercise will quickly become a habit.'

**Motivation**

'Find an item of clothing you really love in the size you want to be and think of it every time you feel like cheating.'

**Diet**

'Don't give up anything you can't bear to live without. I gave up takeaways because I knew I wouldn't really miss them, but I couldn't have given up alcohol!'



**JOINING THE GYM BUNNIES**

'One day, Tony suggested I went with him to the gym, so I did. It felt like a chore and I was easily the biggest person there, but I decided to continue going and soon I was working out three times a week. I'd use the step machine, exercise bike and treadmill for 45 minutes to an hour, and after just six weeks my clothes felt baggier. It took a while for my waist and bust to shrink, which was where I was carrying most of my weight, but eventually they did. After two years, I managed to lose 6st. It was a slow process, but I was ecstatic with my weight loss, especially as my cup size went from a 40E to a 38D. As a reward, I bought lots of really nice bras and got rid of the "boulder holders" I'd had to wear before.

'I've also taken my fitness regime to a new level. Last July, I completed the 5K Race For Life in Nottingham and finished it in 33 minutes. I only started training for the race three weeks beforehand, but because I visit the gym regularly, I only needed to intensify my cardio-training on the treadmill to increase my stamina. I plan to do it again this year.

'The best thing of all is that my body now looks in proportion. I'll never have a small chest, but my backache has gone and I've grown to really appreciate my new body. I'm no longer self-conscious when men look at me in public – in fact, I feel proud.'



Ruth felt very self-conscious about her 40E chest

- \* To find your nearest Slimming World group, call 0870 0754666 or visit [www.slimming-world.com](http://www.slimming-world.com).
- \* To take part in Race For Life, call 0870 5134314 or visit [www.raceforlife.org](http://www.raceforlife.org).
- \* For more inspiring real-life stories, visit [www.netdoctor.co.uk](http://www.netdoctor.co.uk).