

LISA Manley, 31, from Bray, Co. Wicklow, was an overweight teenager living on chocolate, noodles and two litres of Fanta a day. She then became an overweight nurse living on fizzy drinks, six cups of coffee and one ham sandwich a day. She was on a constant regime of heavy laxatives, which she couldn't do without. Suffering from irritable bowel syndrome, she was tired and dispirited. But after she had to take time off work for stress, a friend booked Lisa in for the ultimate 'spring clean' — a colonic irrigation. She didn't know what to expect, but the experience brought her such relief that she wept. Within three weeks, she had lost a stone. Since then, a glowing Lisa has stuck to a healthy, high-fibre diet, and her weight has dropped from 11st to eight. Now a practitioner of colonic irrigation herself, this is Lisa's story...

By HELEN FALCONER

London hospital. It was a stressful job. Not because of the patients, they were wonderful. I would do my best to make them comfortable, and be sensitive to their dignity.

That was the side of the job I loved — working with people and building real relationships.

The trouble was, it was hard to find the time to relate to my patients the way I wanted to. I wanted to make them feel important. For this, I needed more time with them, to win their trust. But instead I was having to fill out forms and paperwork, almost constantly.

The environment was too impersonal. It was harsh, uncaring. After a year, I realised I couldn't do the job I had come into nursing to do — to care properly for people.

By this time I was suffering badly from extreme stress, so much so I had to take time off work. I decided to get healthy, to look after myself a little, de-stress and eat properly — and come off the laxatives.

In my time working in the hospital, my 'teenage diet' had become the typical 'nurse's diet'. Less fizzy drinks — I was down to two cans a day — but endless cups of coffee. I had cut back on the sweets, but replaced them with beer and wine — like all the other nurses, I needed to unwind after the long gruelling shifts.

I was eating next to nothing — I didn't have the time — and I thought by not eating I would lose weight.

I was going through life wondering: 'Why am I so big?' I ate less and less. In the end, all I was having was a sandwich from the canteen, white bread, with a slice of ham or cheese — processed stodge. I couldn't understand why I was still 11st.

My irritable bowel syndrome was getting worse. The laxatives I was being prescribed were getting stronger. By now they were stimulant laxatives, which caused me awful stomach cramps — but they were the only things that would work.

So when I became ill with stress, and tried to eat properly, and not drink, and stopped taking the laxatives, everything just stopped. It was then that one of my friends took pity on me and booked me in for a colonic.

I was very unsure. But off I went, feeling very nervous, bringing the friend with me for moral support.

A nice lady in a white coat welcomed me and assured me there would be no — how shall I put it? — odours!

I lay on a couch with a towel over me, and she discreetly and gently flushed my bowel with warm filtered water. But after all those years of

MY PROBLEMS all started when I was a teenager, living in Bray, Co. Wicklow. I ate the typical teenage girl's 'diet' — no breakfast and a chocolate bar for lunch.

My mother would be still out working when I got home, so instead of eating proper food I would have my favourite dinner — freeze-dried noodles. I drank two whole litres of fizzy drink a day, usually Fanta, and maybe a few cups of coffee as well.

I wasn't the only teenage girl to be eating this way — it seemed normal. It never struck me that it was bad for me. When I felt tired, I would look for that quick energy boost — sugar or refined carbohydrates. Half an hour later would come the energy drop, and then I'd be ready for the jelly sweets!

In my final year of school, my business class needed to set up a company as a project. So we decided to open a tuck shop in the school at lunch. It was a very successful business. You wouldn't bother to bring anything in for lunch, because you knew you could buy sweets.

Back then I was a size 14 and getting heavier. My Leaving Cert was coming up, and I was really stressed. It was painful to go to the toilet and empty my bowels. It got so painful that I had to go to my doctor.

The doctor didn't ask me about my diet. Instead he gave me laxatives and 'bulk'ers (fibre supplements), but they didn't help.

When I left school I was up to a size 16. I'll always remember the day I had to buy my first pair of size 16 trousers. I was thinking: 'Why?' My friends weren't as big as I was, although they were eating sweets for lunch as well.

BY this time, I was suffering from irritable bowel syndrome, IBS. The laxatives the doctors gave me now came in lots of different forms. As a result, I was swinging between serious constipation and painful diarrhoea.

When I was 16 I had worked in a nursing home in Bray, and had developed a love of looking after people, seeing to their needs and making them comfortable. That was when I decided I wanted to make my living in caring for other people. So after school I applied to be a nurse.

These days, the way into nursing is the same as any other college degree — through the points system. But back then, there was an interview, which my best friend and I both failed. So we tried again in England, and this time I was successful.

By 2003, I was a qualified nurse working in the oncology ward of a

LISA 'breakfasts like a king, lunches like a prince, and dines like a pauper'.

BREAKFAST: Natural yoghurt mixed with banana, tahini, flaked almonds, ground flax seeds and rye flakes.

LUNCH: Quinoa cooked with yeast-free stock and mixed with raw vegetables like green beans or broccoli. Also buckwheat or wild rice. Seeds and nut butters. Various oils — coconut for cooking, olive, avocado. Cider vinegar.



LISA'S DIET

SUPPER: Fish or chicken, vegetables or salad.

DRINKS: Two litres of water and herbal teas.

SNACKS: Nuts, carrot sticks and hummus, vegetable juice, oatcakes, rye and buckwheat crackers, popcorn, dark chocolate, above 85 per cent cocoa.

TREAT: A cup of coffee.

Health

Stressed out and suffering from IBS, Lisa gorged on fizzy drinks, coffee and noodles. Then a friend signed her up for a colonic irrigation – which Lisa says was her...

Glowing: Having a colon cleanse set Lisa on the right track



SPRING CLEAN



Unhealthy: Lisa's bad diet contributed to her tiredness

herbs and a diet sheet. I was to eat plenty of vegetables, oats, nuts and seeds — all very high fibre. And I was to come back in three days.

The second colonic worked. It wasn't embarrassing, because the whole process is very discreet. As I felt my body relax, my bottom lip wobbled and I started crying. It was the release of years of stress.

Afterwards I felt strange, kind of euphoric. Not exactly like being drunk — but eerie.

It was like a fresh start. I went cold turkey on the fizzy drinks, coffee and alcohol. I ate regular meals, high in fibre and with no sugar or refined carbohydrates; seeds, nuts, whole grains, vegetables, chicken, fish.

For five days I felt like I had a hangover — cranky, with symptoms like the flu. But after only a week I felt suddenly full of energy. I was in a better mood, and my skin glowed.

By cutting out refined sugar, and stabilising my insulin levels, I had

rid myself of excess fluid retention. And after three weeks, without 'dieting' as such, I had lost a stone. When I met up with my nursing buddies they couldn't believe how well I looked. I had lost so much weight, and my skin was glowing. Now, I'm a size six to eight, and weigh eight stone.

SOON after the process, I was well enough to go back to work, but I wasn't happy. Looking through job adverts in the Nursing Journal, I came across one for a nurse working in colon hydrotherapy and thought: 'Oh my God! This is my calling' and rang the number. The woman interviewed me over the phone, and gave me the job immediately.

My new employer sent me on an

intensive one-week course at the National College of Colon Hydrotherapy in Britain, a professional organisation which only takes students qualified in anatomy or physiology.

There's a lot of unregulated course providers out there, prepared to train people who know nothing about health. Hopefully the whole profession will become properly regulated in the next few years.

The second course, a week-long post-grad which I did two years later, involved infusing herbs into the colonic.

I worked in clinics in London for a few years, but in the end I came back to Dublin, and I am now managing the Hydro Clinic in South Great George's Street.

Our clients are all sorts: city people who live fast lives and are always eating on the run, people with IBS, people with skin problems.

I suggest two to three colonics to start with, and then for healthy people just a couple of times a year. Because we don't want to exploit our clients, we don't say 'eat what you want, and then come in'.

We suggest a good, healthy diet plan. The colonic kick-starts everything, it rids the bowel of everything, and then you can start eating properly.

I tell my clients to come back when the seasons change, and to think of it like a thorough spring clean.

■ **HYDRO Clinic**, 16 South Great George's Street, Dublin 2, visit colonhealth.ie

WHAT IS COLONIC IRRIGATION?

COLONIC irrigation is the internal cleaning of the bowel with a stream of warm water, intended to remove waste from the colon and intestinal tract. Sometimes herbs — or coffee — are introduced into the water. The practice is thousands of years old. The ancient Egyptian medical text known as the Ebers Papyrus, from 1550 BC, prescribes colon cleansing for bowel problems. The Egyptian doctors believed that food rotted the intestines,

and moved from there into the blood, causing fever. The ancient Greeks expanded this idea, and nineteenth century Western medicine elaborated it as 'auto-intoxication', the theory that the body cannot fully detox itself. Nowadays proponents of colonic irrigation say putrefied waste stays inside you for decades, harbouring toxins and pathogenic gut flora that can lead to ill health.

■ **WHAT DOCTORS THINK:** THESE days, mainstream medicine doesn't see any need for colonic

irrigation. The healthy bowel cleans itself without assistance. However, side effects of colonic irrigation for healthy people are rare. The principal medical caveat is that it can lead to a rise in your electrolytes — minerals like sodium, potassium and calcium — which is dangerous if you have kidney disease or heart disease. It may also cause dehydration, so it is important to drink water afterwards. Unregulated and improperly trained practitioners should be avoided. Always seek advice from your doctor first.

Picture: CHRIS BACON