

Health, beauty & wellbeing

Pryers
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to recovering lost fitness

there in February last year. She said it was an emotional time during the treatment but today she is in remission. The former French teacher suffers from lymphoedema after her lymph nodes were removed from under her armpit during treatment.

It can cause fluids to build up in soft tissues, resulting in swelling.

But Nordic walking on the retreat was the ideal workout for her condition.

She said: "My arm swells up when I exercise but the arm action in Nordic walking helped to pump the lymph fluids out of my arm and stopped it from swelling during exertion as it normally would."

"It's the perfect form of exercise for people with my condition."

Nourish & Flourish was set up by Sam Ford, 38, who developed the idea after a friend died from cancer.

She is a personal trainer, sports massage therapist and qualified Nordic walking instructor.

The retreats also offer yoga classes and promote exercise and relaxation, alongside balanced nutrition.

During the retreat, Elizabeth noticed her fitness quickly improved.

She said: "The first couple of days I was out of breath and had to stop."

"But by the third day I didn't notice I'd walked so far."

"When I got home I felt like a new woman and would definitely like to go again. I feel rejuvenated. It was healing experience, not just physically, but mentally as well."

"Sam put on nutritional food and we were provided with a menu pack, so we could maintain a healthy diet when we got home."

"I learnt so much and would definitely recommend it. I had been tempted to go lie on a beach for a couple of weeks, but I'm so glad I went on a Nourish & Flourish retreat."

"If I'd been on a beach holiday, I wouldn't have improved my fitness or learned about better nutrition. It's kick-started my fitness and I came back feeling so rejuvenated, relaxed and healthy. I think these retreats should be available on prescription."

She added the beautiful scenery in the French Alps made the experience all the more enjoyable.

"The scenery was absolutely breathtaking," she said. "Every day I stepped outside and would say 'wow' and I took so many photos. The chalet was lovely and I could watch the sunrise and sunset from the balcony."



IN CHARGE: Sam Ford, who runs the Nourish & Flourish retreats

Scenic settings for flourishing

Nourish & Flourish Retreats are held in France, Sweden and the UK for people who have been diagnosed with breast cancer after their surgical and chemotherapy/radiotherapy treatments have finished.

The retreats cater for a maximum of six people, including the partners, friends or family of those affected by cancer, and offer exercise, relaxation and balanced nutrition.

For more details, visit nourishand-flourishretreats.co.uk or phone 07977518558.

Alternatively, email info@nourishand-flourishretreats.co.uk

You can see details of Elizabeth's trip at [youtube.com/watch?v=WwhDs4cofdU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WwhDs4cofdU)

Tackling migraine myths and reality

WITH more than eight million people in the UK affected, migraine is more common than diabetes, epilepsy and asthma combined. Yet it's often badly misunderstood and awareness is low. A lot of people still think it's just a fancy word for a headache.

Migraine Awareness Week, which runs from September 1 to 7, aims to dispel some of the myths surrounding the condition.

Anyone can suffer from migraines, though they're more common among women, and while children can be affected, attacks usually start during teens.

Currently there's no cure, but treatments are available which can help and, most crucially, understanding migraine can make a huge difference in managing it.

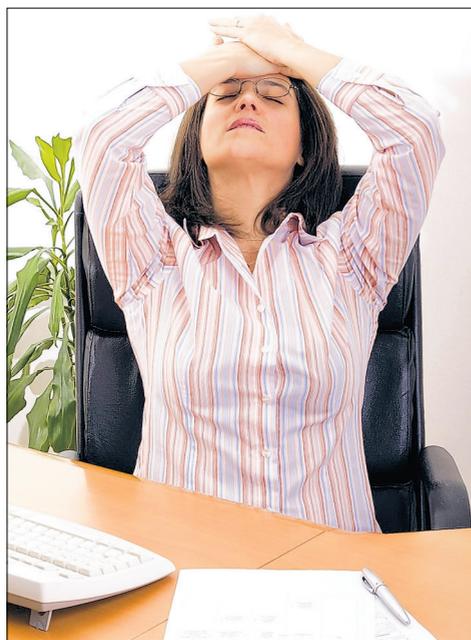
WHEN IS A HEADACHE A MIGRAINE?

"Everybody gets headaches from time to time, but the difference with migraine is partly the severity – it's a much more acute, pounding painful headache, and there are other symptoms associated with it, like vomiting and sensitivity to light," says Dr Tim Woodman, medical director of policy and evidence for Bupa Health Funding.

"You generally do feel very ill with migraine, whereas most other headaches are more of a nagging discomfort." Woodman, a former GP, suffers with migraine himself. He says while headaches are a main characteristic of the condition, the symptoms go far wider.

"It's actually perfectly possible to have a migraine and not even have a headache," he says. "Migraine is a whole complex of symptoms, things like visual discomfort, and pins and needles in your hands and feet."

Some symptoms are known as "aura" symp-



A WHOLE COMPLEX OF SYMPTOMS: A woman suffering a migraine

toms, relating to neurological disturbances like seeing flashing lights and blind spots before the eyes, temporary blindness or tunnel vision and, sometimes, numbness, dizziness and vertigo.

Speech and hearing can be affected too, and some people feel confused, struggle with memory and may experience fainting and vomiting.

A SERIOUS CONDITION

The severity of symptoms varies greatly from person to person. A very mild migraine may

not be too unbearable and might not prevent somebody from carrying out most daily tasks as usual, while severe migraines can be extremely debilitating and make work and socialising impossible. Worldwide, 25 million days are lost from work or school every year.

THE COMMON LINK

One-off attacks are extremely unusual, though Woodman says cluster headaches, a variant of migraine, can occur with very long gaps in between. But for most people migraine is a long-term condition, with attacks coming and going, and more than half of those affected experience one or more episodes a month.

However, while the pattern of symptoms and severity may vary from person to person, it's important to be aware that there is a pattern, as this could be key to managing your migraine.

GET A DIAGNOSIS

The first step is to see a doctor and get a concrete diagnosis. It's believed about 50 per cent of cases remain undiagnosed and untreated. Making a note of any pattern – Woodman suggests keeping a diary, noting when symptoms start, what you were doing at the time and anything you'd eaten – can help.

CRACK THE CODE

This is where keeping a diary comes in especially handy, as familiarising yourself with the pattern of your migraines will help you identify triggers – and avoid them.

"Because we don't really understand what causes migraine, we don't have an obvious cure," says Woodman. "However, an awful lot of the management of migraine is about avoid-

ing triggers. If you're able to clearly identify these, you can effectively go for very long periods without a migraine."

Triggers also vary, but examples include certain foods, hormones (in some women, attacks are linked with their menstrual cycle) and stress. Self-help is an important part of migraine management. Avoiding triggers can reduce attacks and also reduce dependence on medication.

TAKE CONTROL

Taking positive steps to help manage migraine can have wider benefits, too. Living with a painful and debilitating condition can be a stress in itself and it's not uncommon for sufferers to experience low moods.

Depression is three times more common in people with migraine or severe headaches, according to WHO research.

A few steps to improve your lifestyle – like incorporating regular exercise, reducing stress through avoidance and making time for relaxation – can make a big difference.

"If you're suffering from something quite debilitating and feel your mood's low, taking back control of the migraines may help you feel that you're starting to take control of your life generally," says Woodman.

"That sort of empowerment will lift you, and that in turn could actually help reduce symptoms."

• **Migraine Awareness Week 2013 is September 1 to 7. For more information about the campaign and the Migraine Trust, visit migrainetrust.org**

• **For more information about migraine and other common conditions visit bupa.co.uk/health-information**