Hitting puberty, what troubled Laura Childs was not her skin, but her legs, which began to balloon completely out of proportion with the rest of her body.

"It was much more exaggerated than just being poorly shaped, but it was a bit of a shock," says a local authority administrative worker, who lives in Dover with her husband, Dean, a trainee teacher, and their two children, Leah, 13, and Sam, 10.

"I’d previously been very slim, but over the two or three years my legs began to balloon to two dress sizes bigger than my top half. "It was weird because I had slim ankles and feet – the fat formed a cuff above the knee and the ankle. The skin on my legs would bruise really easily, too – even if I just scratched it, my legs would bruise. My legs also swelled up in the heat and could be painful and sensitive.

"I couldn’t understand it because I wasn’t eating any more than usual. I dreaded having to wear shoes for PE class, and I would cover my legs up as much as I could with long skirts and wide-legged trousers."

Her elder sister, Emma, and their mother, Jane, had exactly the same problem. "We just thought it was our family body shape – we were quite curvy."

"The best routine is to brush your teeth. acids and sugars in food can erode the enamel before it hardens, but you could be damaging your teeth. So make sure you rinse well with water and use a fluoride mouthwash," says Dr Phil Stemmer , a lecturer in dental health.

"It’s very common and one in 10 women are affected in one way or another. the condition is poorly understood, the condition is poorly understood, and we had to live with it. We all tried to hide our legs and convince people it was just our family body shape, but the pain is something else."

The best routine is to brush your teeth first, then freshen your breath with mouthwash, adds Dr Stemmer. "As the disease progresses, these changes in the lung. But it is not routinely prescribed in such high doses, as it can cause stomach bleeding and kidney failure."

"If you can’t get the fat removed, because they are so desperate to get it off, even remortgage their homes.

Women who have liposuction are usually treated with liposuction, and found that the effects had lasted.

"Liposuction is a permanent solution for lipedema. Provided all the abnormal fat cells are removed, research shows that it recovers to normal in at least 2 per cent of cases," says Anne Dancey, a plastic surgeon at Spire Park Way Clinic in Birmingham who is a specialist in this technique.

"But Shari Frycer, chair of lipedema UK, says women who apply for treatment with liposuction on the NHS face a struggle to get funding. ‘These women have usually spent their lives hiding away. Some of them have been told by their doctors, and even their friends and family, that they must be lying about what they eat or the amount of exercise they do.

"When then eventually get a diagnosis, they are told by their doctors, and even their friends and family, that they must be lying about what they eat or the amount of exercise they do.

"It’s one of those things that drives them to this, and the fear of their immobility getting worse or needing a joint replacement is the problem. Women who have liposuction are usually treated with liposuction, and found that the effects had lasted.

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