



## Brenda's story – Nurse who suffers a back injury

Registered nurse, Brenda, couldn't be happier with her new life – healthier, fitter and working.

She still suffers pain as a result of her work accident, but a combination of career training, medical and specialist treatment and a job opportunity have all played a part in getting her back on track.

After more than 25 years as a registered nurse working in hospital and aged care settings, in 1998 Brenda was hurt at work.

"I was on night duties in charge of 40 residents in an aged care facility. We were understaffed and I had to move a client in bed," explained Brenda. "At the time I felt a ping in my back so I lay down for a while then worked the rest of the shift. The next day I could barely move. Eventually the specialists found that I had disc problems and compressed nerves, which explained the constant radiated pain."

After a short time off work, Brenda returned to the same employer to do alternative duties. While still experiencing back pain three months after her injury, she pushed a medications trolley over an uneven floor surface and damaged her knee.

"I had a couple of weeks off for that to settle, then got shifted to clerical duties at various sites. I didn't feel my employer was supportive at all – they undermined me in many small ways that took their toll," Brenda said.

Treatment Brenda received included consultation with back and knee surgeons and physiotherapists who prescribed regular Pilates and gym work. She also found assistance from a psychologist to be "essential" to help her manage pain and stay positive.

In November 2001, Brenda ceased working and began her earnest search for suitable alternative employment. Cleared for part-time work, she set about re-training to update her skills with computers and administration.

"I decided to do a mail-out to the laboratories and ended up with three job offers. I was thrilled to accept the job with Gribbles in April 2004," she said.

"While searching for work, if I mentioned the work injury straight away I'd never get anywhere. Even socially, people made judgements about me and looked down on me. I just wanted to get my life together and start working again. Being on workers compensation is really like being in limbo – life's on hold."

After extensive weight loss and a new fitness program, Brenda now manages her condition without drugs. And being back at work, has changed everything.

"I'm really enjoying the new role, even though I miss nursing, but the conditions suit me at Gribbles and because I'm constantly on the go I avoid the problems that extended sitting, bending or lifting cause."