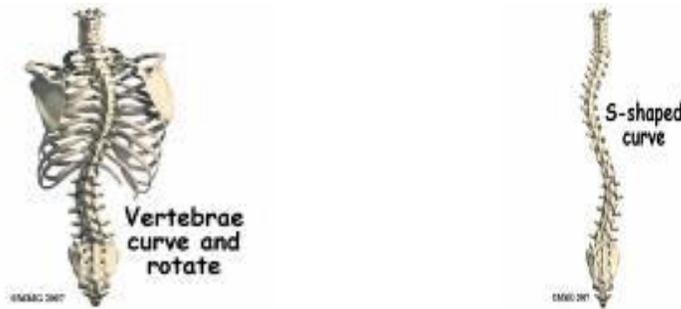


What is Scoliosis?

Scoliosis is an abnormal curving of the spine. Your spine is your backbone. Everyone's spine naturally curves a bit. However, people with scoliosis have a spine that curves from side to side, and rotate. Unlike poor posture, these curves can't be corrected simply by learning to stand up straight. The cause of scoliosis is unknown. Usually there are no symptoms. However, symptoms can occur such as low-back pain or a tired feeling in the spine after sitting or standing a long time.



How Is It Noticed?

One of the most common signs of scoliosis is a prominent shoulder blade, frequently the right one. The hips may be uneven and one seems to be higher than the other. Scoliosis should not be confused with poor posture. Often the first indication of a scoliosis is clothing not fitting properly such as a hemline of a skirt being crooked.

Is Scoliosis Common?

According to the Scoliosis Research Society, about 10% of the adolescent population has some degree of scoliosis. About 2-3% of these children will require medical attention. Mild scoliosis occurs nearly as often in boys as in girls. More serious curves are five to eight times greater in girls than boys. There is virtually no variation of racial or ethnic incidence.

Are There Different Types of Scoliosis?

There are many causes for scoliosis. 80-85% of cases are idiopathic, which means no known cause. Scoliosis many often run in families due to genetic or hereditary factors. Scoliosis may also be caused by muscle and nerve disorders, connective tissue disorders or chromosomal abnormalities. These causes are congenital, which means the scoliosis is caused by abnormalities in the formation of the vertebrae and are present at birth. Children's spines should be checked regularly for scoliosis until growth is complete. Scoliosis can progress considerably during the last major growth spurt.

Simple Home Test For the Detection of Scoliosis

Have your child facing away from you, in a bathing suit or underwear, with the arms hanging down loosely.

- ✓ Is one shoulder higher than the other?
- ✓ Is one shoulder blade more prominent than the other?
- ✓ Does one hip seem higher than the other?
- ✓ Is there a greater distance between the arm and the side of the body on one side compared with the other?
- ✓ Is there a larger crease at one side of the waist than the other, or is the crease at a different level?



Have your child turn to the side.

- ✓ Does the back appear excessively round?

Have your child bend forward with the arms hanging down loosely. The palms should be touching each other at about the level of the knees. Look at your child in this position from the front, side and back.

- ✓ Is one side of the back higher than the other?
- ✓ Is there any asymmetry in the back?
- ✓ When looking from the side, is there a sharp change in the curvature of the back?

If you have any "yes" answers or if the child has a brother, sister, parent or other close relative with scoliosis, consult your family doctor.

Can Scoliosis be Cured?

There are currently no medications to treat scoliosis, nor can its onset be prevented. When scoliosis is detected, the doctor may refer the patient to an orthopedic spinal specialist for evaluation and treatment. This may consist of periodic examinations, including X-rays to determine if the curve is increasing in size. If scoliosis is identified early, large curves may often be prevented by wearing a brace. Severe curves may require surgical treatment.

Want More Information?

You can receive information, help and referrals free of charge from the Scoliosis Association, Inc. The Association is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization that was founded by scoliosis patients and their families in 1974 and was incorporated in 1976. The Association has a wide range of materials available. Further information can be found at: www.scoliosis-assoc.org

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