



APRIL 2009 Newsletter

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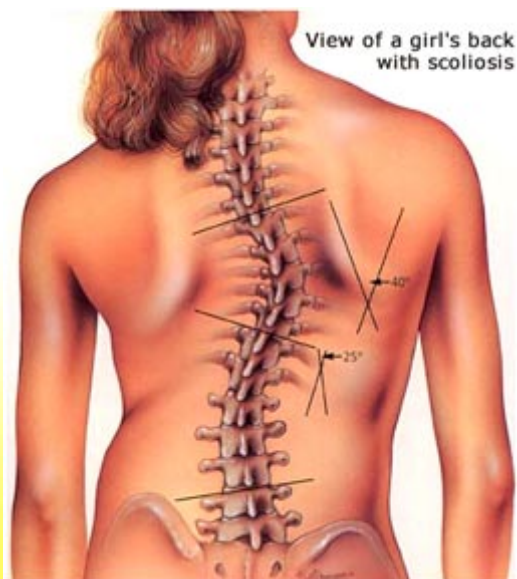
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Can't stand up straight?

How many times a day do you tell your child to stand up straight? How many times have you looked at your child's spine? Is it straight? Can you tell? Have you ever had your child screened for scoliosis?

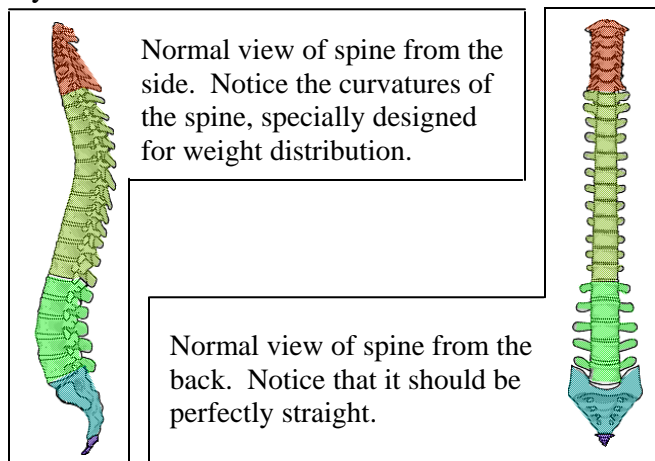
What is scoliosis?

Scoliosis affects 2-3% of the population, or about 6 million people just in the United States! The most common age that scoliosis develops is 10-15 years, but can develop much earlier—even in infancy. Congenital scoliosis is due to a birth defect, and is usually present with other congenital problems. Most cases of scoliosis, however, are idiopathic, or are of unknown cause. No one knows who will get it, why they get it, if it will progress, or how much it will progress. There is no cure for scoliosis. However, there are a variety of possible treatments for the condition, and one of the most important factors is early detection.



How is scoliosis diagnosed?

While looking at a person from the side, a person's spine normally has 3 major curvatures, designed to distribute weight evenly. While looking at a person from the back, however, the spine should be straight from the base of the neck down to the tailbone. If there are any curvatures of the spine while looking at a person from the back, that person may have scoliosis.



Scoliosis is defined as an abnormal curvature and rotation of the spine. Some signs of scoliosis are:

- Uneven shoulders
- One shoulder blade appearing more prominent
- Uneven hips/waist
- Appearing to lean to one side
- Limbs having length discrepancy
- Back pain (although a lot of scoliosis cases are painless)

A trained professional can make the diagnosis of scoliosis by performing a physical exam, making observations from the person's posture and sometimes X-rays to confirm the diagnosis and to measure the degree of curvature.

In many school systems, scoliosis screenings are performed by the school nurse. If you think that your child may have scoliosis, have him or her evaluated with a thorough examination immediately.

What are different treatment options for scoliosis?

Depending on the degree of curvature, various treatments can be recommended. Oftentimes, doctors will recommend monitoring curvatures under 20° to ensure that it does not progress. A curvature measuring 20°-45° usually requires some sort of bracing, and curvatures over 45° will be referred for a surgical consultation.

In other words, for a curvature that is less than 20°, there is no treatment. It is recommended that the child get check-ups every few months to see if the curvature is increasing, but if not, there is no treatment recommended. The bracing that occurs in curvatures 20°-45° is usually very aggressive. The brace is usually worn up to 20 hours per day, and there are stretching exercises prescribed in addition to the brace. There has been some controversy over the effectiveness of bracing, and whether it is actually beneficial in the reducing, or stopping the progression of, spinal curvatures.

What complications can scoliosis cause?

Most complications are only associated with severe scoliosis, or greater than 45°. With these severe curvatures, the ribcage is deformed and can put pressure on the heart and lungs, making it difficult to breathe and to circulate blood and oxygen to the tissues of the body. Any time breathing is compromised, the risk of lung infections and pneumonia increases, so these individuals are carefully watched for these complications as well.

Probably the most common complication of scoliosis is psychological. Children with spinal curvatures that are visually evident often feel isolated from their peers and embarrassed about

their appearance. This is worsened if they are required to wear a brace for their scoliosis. It is important for parents to keep their children involved in confidence-building activities so a healthy body image can develop.

The complication that Chiropractors are most concerned about is the development of early arthritis in the spines of individuals who have scoliosis. Your spine has a specific architectural design that is important in weight distribution. If these joints are not allowed to move properly, they will experience an accelerated rate of degeneration, resulting in irreversible arthritis in those joints. This is a progressive process, and can be very painful. Over time, an individual with severe degeneration can lose the use of those arthritic joints, and sometimes can suffer neurological deficits of the associated spinal nerves.

How can Chiropractic help?

While more research is needed to determine if Chiropractic can help stop progression or reverse a spinal curvature, there is evidence that Chiropractic can decrease the progression of degeneration in the spine. Degeneration of the spine is caused by lack of motion or abnormal movement of a joint. Chiropractors restore movement in joints and ensure that the joints of your spine are moving correctly. Degenerative changes are permanent, so the key is stopping the damage before it is done. Chiropractic also is also very effective in pain management, and can often decrease the painful symptoms of having a spinal curvature.

Source:

Mayo Clinic, National Scoliosis Foundation



On March 17, 2009, hundreds of doctors from all parts of Minnesota were present at our state's Capitol to continue the ongoing discussions about healthcare and the decisions being made that affect our citizens. During this day, representatives of each part of our state had the opportunity to sit down and discuss the healthcare reform issues with local doctors, students, and patients. Representing the Mankato, North Mankato and St. Peter areas, we had the opportunity to meet with Senator Kathy Sheran, State Representative Kathy Brynaert, and State Representative Terry Morrow.

Pictured here (from left to right) are: Senator Kathy Sheran, Dr. Brad Schaff, Dr. Cuong Huynh, Dr. Laura Hulsebus, Dr. Monica Schugel, Dr. Debra Bobendrier, and Dr. Mark Dehen.