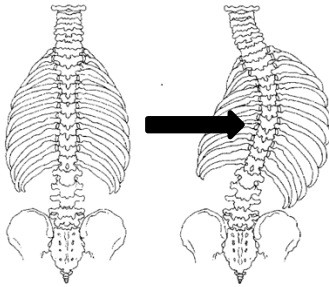


# SCOLIOSIS SCREENING

## Fast Facts about Scoliosis

- Scoliosis is a side to side curve greater than 10 degrees in the spine. It can look like an "S" or a "C." See the illustration below.\*
- It causes the spine to rotate (twist) which can make the shoulders, chest or hips look uneven.
- Many people have a small curve less than 10 degrees and may not ever know about it.
- About 2% of the population has scoliosis. It affects boys and girls equally but girls are more likely to need treatment.



## Causes of Scoliosis

- **Congenital scoliosis:** Develops because one or more bones in the spine form abnormally and grow abnormally.
- **Neuromuscular scoliosis:** Caused by weakness of the muscles that support the spine, such as cerebral palsy or spina bifida.
- **Idiopathic scoliosis:** Occurs in otherwise healthy people. There is no known cause for the curve but it is thought to be genetic.
  - Most common type is idiopathic scoliosis. When it occurs in teens we call it adolescent idiopathic scoliosis, or "AIS."

## Myths about What Causes Scoliosis

- These things *do not* cause AIS:
  - Heavy backpacks
  - Soft, saggy mattresses
  - Poor posture
  - Poor nutrition
  - Playing sports

## Scoliosis Screening Exam

- Scoliosis is found through a screening exam. This is usually done in schools but can also be done during sports physicals or by a pediatrician or primary care physician.
- School screening exams are:
  - Required by law in the state of Georgia
  - Performed by trained professionals like PE and Health teachers, school nurses, or volunteers
  - Held in a private area and boys and girls are screened separately
  - Quick, usually lasting 1-2 minutes per exam
- Children are asked to take off their shirts and are asked to stand straight and then bend forward so the screener can look for signs of scoliosis.

Please Note: The information included in this fact sheet is for educational purposes only. It contains general information and is not specific medical advice for your child. Consult with your child's doctor if you have any questions or concerns about your child's health. Reading the information in this fact sheet does not create a physician-patient relationship.

\*Medical illustration used with permission of the University of Iowa Children's Hospital.

## Signs and Symptoms of Scoliosis

- While child is standing:
  - Uneven shoulders or hips
  - Unequal distance between the arm and body on either side
  - One shoulder blade sticking out more than the other
- While child is bending forward:
  - Rib hump (rib prominence)
  - Lower back hump (lumbar prominence)
- An x-ray of the spine will confirm a diagnosis of scoliosis.
- **Important:** AIS does not usually cause back pain. If your child complains of back pain, have your doctor exam your child to find out what may be causing the pain.

## Treatment for Idiopathic Scoliosis

- **Observation (curves less than 20-25 degrees):** The doctor will follow-up with your child every 4-6 months with an exam and x-ray until he or she is done growing.
- **Bracing:** If your child's curve increases a back brace may be recommended to try to keep the curve from worsening.
- **Surgery (curves larger than 45-50 degrees):** The doctor may recommend a surgery called a "spinal fusion" for teens whose curves reach this degree and their growth is finished.

## Helpful Tips

- Take advantage of the opportunity to have your child participate in a school scoliosis screening program if available to you.
- Girls can wear a sports bra or a bathing suit top on the day of the screening to feel more comfortable when removing their shirts.
- Follow-up with your pediatrician or primary care physician if you receive a letter that your child may have scoliosis from the school.

## Sources for More Information

- Scoliosis Research Society – [www.srs.org/patient\\_and\\_family/scoliosis/idiopathic/adolescents](http://www.srs.org/patient_and_family/scoliosis/idiopathic/adolescents)
- American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons – [orthoinfo.aaos.org/topic.cfm?topic=A00353](http://orthoinfo.aaos.org/topic.cfm?topic=A00353)
- Kids Health - [kidshealth.org/kid/health\\_problems/bone/scolio.html](http://kidshealth.org/kid/health_problems/bone/scolio.html)
- Radiology Info – [radiologyinfo.org](http://radiologyinfo.org)

**Our orthopaedists can help answer more questions  
about your child's spine.  
Call our office at (404) 321-9900 for an appointment!**