



Children's Health

Scoliosis

HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

A progressive, abnormal curving in the middle or lower spine is referred to as scoliosis. It can occur at any age, but it most often begins during adolescence. It's more common in females than in males. The cause is unknown, but it's often genetic.

SIGNS OF SCOLIOSIS

rounded shoulders

one shoulder that is higher than the other

a sunken chest

a swayback

a scapula (shoulder blade) that sticks out abnormally

one side of the pelvis thrusting forward

back pain



If you notice any of the above signs in your child, your child's doctor should be consulted. The curve is often much greater than it appears to be, and early treatment is important. Screening for scoliosis is easy and should be done beginning at about age 10 and continue until the spine has fully matured.

HOW SCOLIOSIS IS TREATED

Treatments will depend on the underlying cause and severity of the curvature. Physical therapy can improve posture and tone up the spinal muscles. A spinal brace, fitted by an orthopedic surgeon, that is worn for at least one year can help straighten the curvature as the spine grows and matures. Readjustment is done every three months. Once the spine has matured, the brace can be worn less often. Severe spinal curvature is corrected with surgery. This involves fusing the spine and inserting a rod to stabilize the spine. An upper body cast remains in place for six months after surgery.