

WHAT IS SCOLIOSIS?

An abnormal curvature of the vertebral column, especially a lateral curvature, is called scoliosis. A healthy, mature spine is a series of alternating convex and concave curves that support the body and absorb shock. The spinal column is made up of 24 vertebrae, the sacrum and the coccyx.

The seven cervical vertebrae in the neck are the smallest and allow the widest range of movement along the spine. The thoracic part of the spine, just below the neck, is made up of twelve heavier vertebrae and forms the upper back. Five lumbar vertebrae make up the lower part of the back. These are the largest bones of the spine and bear most of the body's weight. Beneath the lumbar spine are the wedge-shaped sacrum and the coccyx.



In scoliosis, more than 60% of cases occur in girls. One of the first signs of a scoliosis is seen when one of the youngster's shoulders appears to be higher than the other or when their clothes do not hang straight.

In the early stages, the child may complain of tiredness in the lower back when sitting or standing for a long period. As the scoliosis worsens, the child may complain of backaches and then pain.

As the abnormal spinal curvature increases, it can compress the rib cage and affect breathing. It can also irritate or compress the spinal nerves to the internal

organs of the body causing a host of associated symptoms such as headaches, indigestion, fatigue, nervousness, irritability, moodiness, inability to concentrate, etc.

The most important step in treating scoliosis is to stop the progression of the condition as soon as possible.

Scoliosis is comparable to a young tree that has accidentally been bent but not broken. The small tree may continue to grow but will grow crooked UNLESS we gently straighten it before it matures.

There are currently no medications to treat scoliosis, or to prevent it. Physical treatment is an absolute necessity.

The first step in treating a child's scoliosis is to stop the progression of the condition as soon as possible.

Doctors of chiropractic are trained in the detection and gentle correction of spinal curvatures.

All children should have an annual back checkup by a spinal specialist—

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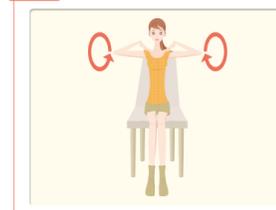
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