

Scoliosis

By Dr. Heath Schipp

Scoliosis is a problem that affects 3% of our children. Scoliosis is an abnormal curvature of the spine in which the spine is twisted side-to-side, often taking a “C” or an “S” shaped appearance. The curve can get worse over time causing pain, frustration, decreased motion, and even breathing and circulation problems. The condition usually begins in childhood, although often it is not identified until the teenage years or later. Scoliosis affects more girls than boys and runs in the family.

Types of Scoliosis

There are 3 types of scoliosis: congenital, idiopathic, and functional. Congenital is the least common and comes from a bony abnormality. Examples of a congenital scoliosis include half formed vertebra and abnormally shaped bones. This type of scoliosis may require surgery to correct the abnormally shaped bones.

Idiopathic scoliosis begins early in life and worsens during periods of rapid growth. After skeletal maturity most curves slow their progress. Chiropractic has excellent results with these patients.

Functional scoliosis is caused by a biomechanical imbalance. These include postural habits, muscle imbalances, pelvic and spinal misalignments and subluxations, and leg length discrepancies. These curves are identified easily because they usually reduce in severity when the child lies down. Chiropractic care works well with these cases.

Early Detection Tips for Parents

Scoliosis usually goes undetected in a child because it is rarely painful in the early formative years. Therefore, parents should watch for the following “tipoffs” that scoliosis is beginning in their child as early as 8 years old:

- Uneven shoulders
- Prominent shoulder blade
- Uneven waist
- Elevated hips
- Leaning to one side
- Curve in the spine

If you notice any of these warning signs in your child, have them examined by a chiropractor or other health care physician.

Treatments

Unlike poor posture, these curves cannot be corrected by simply learning to stand up straight, so treatment must be considered by a chiropractor or another health care physician. Adjustments from a chiropractor can increase movement, biomechanical function, and decrease curvatures. Exercise can help to prevent further deterioration. Electrical muscle stimulation can also help with treatment. Bracing and surgery may be needed, if the curve is severe.

Early detection is the key to prevent the curve from progressing. So use the tips for detection and if you see any of the symptoms, consult your chiropractor immediately.

