



In Summary

Scoliosis is a problem that usually requires only observation with regular examinations during the growing years. Key to managing scoliosis is early detection, so that the curve does not get a chance to progress. For the small number of patients that will require medical treatment, the advances in modern orthopedic techniques have made scoliosis a very manageable condition. Your orthopedic specialist has experience and training in the diseases of the muscles and bones, and can diagnose, treat and monitor this condition.

Are There Other Treatments for Scoliosis?

People have tried other ways to treat scoliosis, however, at this time, the following treatments have not been shown to prevent scoliosis from worsening:

- Chiropractic manipulation
- Electrical stimulation
- Nutritional supplements
- Exercise (It is important to note that exercise is encouraged for patients with scoliosis, as it is important for general health and well being.)

Contributing to the Community's Health

Frequently people inquire as to how they may make a contribution to the community's health. We encourage you to consider Glendale Adventist Medical Center's Healthcare Foundation whenever you or your family desire to make a difference in the health of our community. For more information, please call (818) 409-8055.

Physician Referral (818) 409-8100

7 Understanding Scoliosis

at Glendale Adventist Medical Center



There are a number of options for treating scoliosis, each with their advantages and disadvantages.

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What is Scoliosis?

The normal spine, when viewed from the side has natural curves that round our shoulders and make our lower back curve slightly inward. However, some people develop an abnormal curvature of the spine, and this condition is called scoliosis.

Who Gets Scoliosis?

People of all ages can develop scoliosis, but it most often occurs in children, usually after the age of 10, and is more common in girls than in boys. Approximately three to five of every 1000 children will develop spinal curves large enough to require treatment. The most common form of scoliosis is called Adolescent Idiopathic Scoliosis (scoliosis of unknown cause), which accounts for 80–85% of all cases.

Scoliosis can run in families, so a child who has a parent, brother or sister with idiopathic scoliosis should be checked regularly.

Adults can also develop scoliosis. Usually, adult scoliosis is a result of a progression of condition that began in childhood, but was not detected or treated while the person was still growing. In other cases, scoliosis can develop as a result of degenerative disc disease and osteoporosis.

How is Scoliosis Diagnosed?

Idiopathic scoliosis can go undetected in children for years because it is rarely painful in its initial stages. This makes it very important that parents and family doctors watch for the following early manifestations of scoliosis, beginning at around age eight:

- Uneven shoulders
- One hip higher than the other
- Leaning to one side
- Uneven waist
- Prominent shoulder blades or shoulder blade

The appearance of any one of these signs indicates the need for an evaluation by a doctor.

The doctor will then take a medical history, and perform a physical examination. During the exam, the doctor will check if the shoulders are level, and with the patient leaning forward, see if one side of the rib cage is higher than the other.

Normal spine, viewed from rear



Spine with scoliosis, viewed from rear



Scoliosis is a sideways curvature of the spine

Will I Need an X-Ray?

If a significant spinal curve is detected, an x-ray is helpful to determine its severity. The x-ray will be taken with the patient standing. The doctor will then measure the curve to determine how to best treat the scoliosis.

Does Scoliosis Have To Be Treated?

In the majority of cases, the curves detected are very mild and will not require treatment. Generally, curves greater than 20 degrees require treatment. The recommended treatment will depend on a number of factors including the patient's age, how much more he or she is likely to grow, the degree and pattern of the curve, and the type of scoliosis. Treatments include observation, bracing and surgery.

- **Observation** may be all that is necessary. The doctor will examine the patient every four to six months while he or she is still growing.
- **Bracing** may be recommended to stop a curve from getting worse.
- **Surgery** may be recommended for severe cases to correct a curve or stop it from worsening while the patient is still growing.