

Scoliosis

Coping with the normal physical changes that come with adolescence is trying enough. When out-of-the-ordinary physical changes occur, the problem is doubly challenging. Such is the case with scoliosis. It generally shows up between the ages of 10 and 15, and affects girls seven to nine times more often than boys. In most cases, no one knows the cause.



SYMPTOMS

Most children and teens with mild scoliosis do not have symptoms or pain, other than changes in posture. Other signs include:

- Top of shoulders are uneven.
- One shoulder blade is more visible or prominent than the other.
- One hip appears higher than the other.
- One side of the rib cage is higher than the other when bending forward.

If the scoliosis is progressing and the curve of the spine is more severe, this can also cause back pain. In severe cases, there may be difficulty breathing.

Adults with scoliosis should watch for signs of it in their children.

Scoliosis doesn't always need treatment. In some cases, though, treatment is necessary to prevent heart and lung problems or back pain later in life.

TREATMENT

- Wearing a molded body brace under clothing. This brace is typically worn most of the day and night for several years. Because the spine grows rapidly during adolescence, wearing a brace at this time can arrest further abnormal curving.
- Physical therapy to help strengthen muscles
- Surgery to straighten the spine. For example, an expandable rod is implanted alongside the spine.

In most instances, scoliosis can be sufficiently treated so that the adolescent doesn't suffer any complications as an adult.