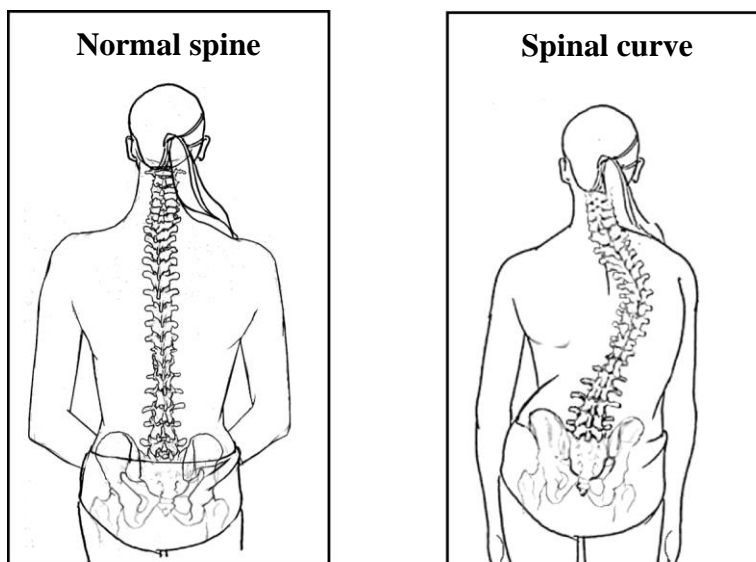


## What is scoliosis?

Adolescent idiopathic scoliosis (AIS) is a sideways curve of the spine.

- Adolescent means that it most often happens in children over the age of 10 and in teens.
- Idiopathic means that we do not know what causes it.

The curve can make the spine look more like an “S” or a “C” than a straight line. It can also cause the spine to rotate. This can make the shoulders or waist look uneven.



## What causes scoliosis?

Scoliosis can run in families, but there is no known cause.

## What does not cause scoliosis?

Scoliosis is not caused by:

- Bad posture
- Heavy backpacks
- Poor diet

## What are the possible signs of scoliosis?

Your child may have one or more of these when standing up:

- One shoulder blade sticks out more than the other
- Uneven shoulders

**In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.**

# Scoliosis, continued

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- Uneven hips
- One leg seems longer than the other

Your child may have one or more of these when bending forward:

- Rib hump called a rib prominence
- Lower back hump called a lumbar prominence

Most often, scoliosis does not cause back pain. If your child feels back pain, tell the doctor.

## What tests could my child have?

Two tests to check for scoliosis include:

- Scoliosis screening exam. A trained expert like a nurse or doctor will do an exam. They are looking for signs of scoliosis.
- X-rays of the back and spine. X-rays can:
  - Show the doctor if your child has a curve in the spine.
  - Measure the amount of curve in your child's back. The curve is measured in degrees.
  - Tell the doctor how much growing your child has left to do. When this is known, the doctor will be able to tell if the curve will get worse or not. If your child is still growing, the doctor may want to recheck the curve later before talking about treatment.

## What is the treatment?

A bone and muscle doctor called an orthopedist most often treats scoliosis. Treatment depends on the degree of the spine curve and how much growing your child has left to do. Sometimes, no treatment is needed.

If your child needs treatment, the doctor will talk with you about the options. This may include:

- Observing – checking for changes in the curve with an X-ray several times a year.
- Bracing – wearing a form-fitting brace for a certain number of hours every day.
- Surgery – getting a spinal fusion. During surgery, the bones in the spine (called vertebrae) are joined or fused together to help keep them lined up.

## When should I call the doctor?

Call the doctor if your child has back pain. This could be a sign of another problem.

## Does my child need follow-up care?

Yes. Be sure to follow the doctor's advice. Your child may need follow-up X-rays at certain times throughout the year.

**This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.**

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