

# **Scoliosis Information for Parents**

The Code of Virginia states that schools will provide information on [Scoliosis](#) to parents of students in grades 5 through 10 or implement a program of regular screening for students in grades 5 through 10. Information on Scoliosis can be provided to parents/guardians through resources such as student or parent handbook, website posting, mail or other forms of electronic communication.

The Virginia Department of Education encourages schools to notify parents in advance of planned scoliosis screening and provide privacy during the screening process.

## **What is Scoliosis?**

Scoliosis is a sideways curve of the spine. Children and teens with Scoliosis have an abnormal S-shaped or C-shaped curve of the spine. The curve can happen on either side of the spine and in different places in the spine.

With treatment, observation, and follow-up with the doctor, most children and teens with scoliosis have normal, active lives.

## **Who gets Scoliosis?**

Anyone can get Scoliosis. However, the most common type usually occurs in children age 11 and older. Girls are more likely than boys to have this type of scoliosis. You are more likely to have scoliosis if your parents, brother, or sister has been diagnosed with this condition.

## **What are the symptoms of Scoliosis?**

Most children and teens with mild Scoliosis do not have symptoms or pain. Sometimes, there are changes in posture, which may be a sign of scoliosis. Other signs may include the following:

- Shoulders are uneven.
- One shoulder blade (in the upper back) sticks out more.
- One hip looks higher than the other.
- Your child's rib cage may stick out more when he or she bends forward.

If the curve is more severe, the changes in the shape of the spine can lead to back pain. Rarely, some children may have a hard time breathing because of the curve.

## **What causes Scoliosis?**

In most cases, the cause of Scoliosis is unknown. Doctors think that a mix of factors may lead to the disorder, such as genetics, puberty or trauma.

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For some children, Scoliosis happens when another disease or disorder, or trauma causes the curving spin of the spine.

## Is there a test for Scoliosis?

Most children and teens do not have symptoms. Healthcare providers may diagnose scoliosis during a routine exam. Your child's doctor may diagnose Scoliosis by:

- Taking a medical history and family history.
- Completing a [Scoliosis Physical Exam](#)
- Taking x-rays.

## How is Scoliosis treated?

If your child has Scoliosis, your child's doctor may recommend the following treatments:

- **Observation.** If the curve is mild and your child is still growing, the doctor may recommend checking the spine every few months.
- **Bracing.** If the curve is moderate and your child or teen is still growing, your doctor may recommend using a brace to keep the curve from getting any worse.
- **Surgery.** If your child or teen is still growing and the scoliosis continues to progress, your doctor may recommend surgery. The type of surgery depends on the location and severity of the curve.
- **Physical therapy.** The doctor may recommend physical therapy to help muscles get stronger.

## Who treats Scoliosis?

The following healthcare providers may treat Scoliosis in children and teens:

- Orthopedic specialists who specialize in the treatment of and surgery for bone and joint diseases or injuries.
- Pediatricians, who diagnose and treat children.
- Physical therapists, who teach ways to build muscle strength.
- Primary care providers, such as a family physician.

## Living with Scoliosis

The following tips may help your child or teen while living with Scoliosis.

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- Regular exercise helps your child or teen remain physically fit and help muscles get stronger. Talk to your child's doctor about taking part in sports and activities.
- If your child or teen wears a brace, they may feel self-conscious or embarrassed. If your child or teen will not wear their brace, talk to the doctor about other bracing or treatment options.
- Consider joining a community or online scoliosis support group. It can help you and your child or teen cope with scoliosis and its treatment.

### **For more information**

#### **American Physical Therapy Association**

Website: <https://www.apta.org>

#### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics**

Website: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs>

#### **National Scoliosis Foundation**

Website: <https://www.scoliosis.org>

#### **Scoliosis Research Society**

Website: <https://www.srs.org>

#### **The Scoliosis Association, Inc.**

Website: <http://www.scoliosis-assoc.org>