

Treatment for scoliosis

- Most scoliosis is very slight and needs no treatment.
- Small curves may be watched during the child's growing period to see if they get larger (and most don't get large enough to need treatment).
- If the curve is large, or it is getting larger, and treatment is needed, the results of treatment are very good, especially when the curve is found early.
 - A spinal brace may stop a curve from becoming worse. These braces need to be worn for most of every day for more than a year.
 - An operation is needed for some severe curves.
- Physiotherapy and chiropractic treatment cannot cure scoliosis.
- Untreated severe scoliosis can cause back pain and breathing problems.
- People with scoliosis need to exercise normally and stay fit for their general health and wellbeing. Their spine is not 'weak', and there is no need to stop any exercise.

For more information contact:

- Local community school health nurse
- Local family doctor.
- Scoliosis Australia
www.scoliosis-australia.org
 for the self detection brochure

This information, along with other child health information, is available in electronic format at www.healthywa.wa.gov.au

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability. Please contact childcommunity@health.wa.gov.au

© Women's and Children's Health Network, reproduced with permission. The South Australian Government does not accept responsibility for the accuracy of this reproduction. The original version is published at <http://www.cyh.com>

Warning

This document is published as general information only. You should always consult a healthcare professional for diagnosis and treatment of any health condition or symptoms.

Disclaimer

The advice and information contained herein is provided in good faith as a public service. However, the accuracy of any statements made is not guaranteed and it is the responsibility of readers to make their own enquiries as to the accuracy, currency and appropriateness of any information or advice provided. Liability for any act or omission occurring in reliance on this document, or for any loss, damage or injury occurring as a consequence of such act or omission, is expressly disclaimed.

scoliosis



What is scoliosis?

- The normal spine has three curves: one in the neck, one in the upper back and one in the lower back. These curves can be seen from the side, but when you look from behind the spine should appear straight.
- If the spine has a sideways curve, this is scoliosis (sco-li-o-sis).
- About 1 in 10 to 1 in 20 girls develop some scoliosis during their growing period in early adolescence (from about 9 to 14 years), but in most cases the curve is mild and does not need treatment. Scoliosis is less common in boys.
- Only about 3 in 1000 children have curves that are large enough to need treatment.

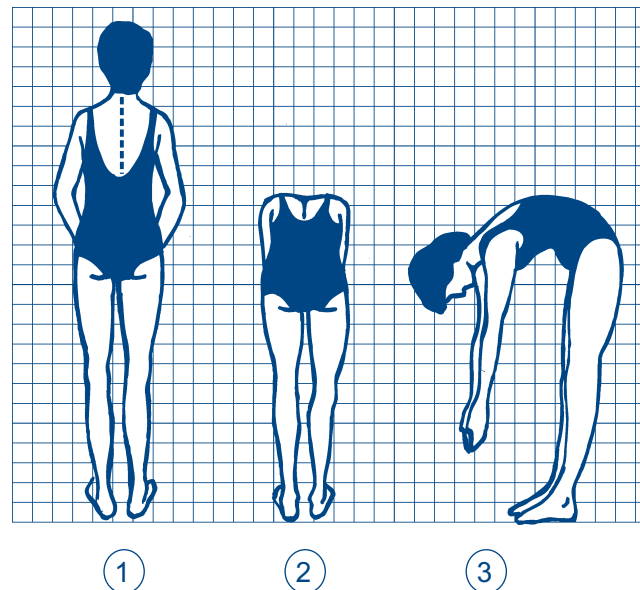
What causes scoliosis?

- The cause of most scoliosis is not known. This is called idiopathic scoliosis. Sometimes other people in a family also have idiopathic scoliosis.
- In some children there are other problems, such as an injury causing muscle spasm, an injury to the spine, unequal leg lengths, or problems with muscle control (e.g. cerebral palsy) causing the sideways bend of the spine. If these can be treated the scoliosis will go away.

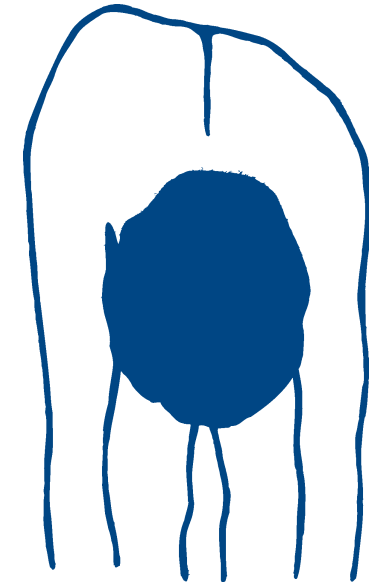
How to look for signs of scoliosis

- Young people will need to get someone to check their back; they cannot do this themselves.
- First get them to stand up straight, with feet together and arms hanging by their side (Position 1). The person looking at the back checks to see if:
 - one shoulder is higher than the other
 - one shoulder blade is higher or sticks out more than the other
 - one hip sticks out more than the other.
- Then they need to bend forward with their legs straight so that their hands are near to their feet (Positions 2 & 3). The person looking checks to see if one side of the back is higher than the other.

See diagram below of how to stand



- Sometimes with scoliosis, one side of the back may be higher at the top of the back, and the other side may be higher in the lower back.



Forward bending test

- If there are any of these signs of possible scoliosis, the young person needs to have their back checked by a doctor.
- If the scoliosis is more than a mild curve, x-rays will be done to measure the curve, and repeated later so that changes in the curve can be picked up. Sometimes the curve is so large that a doctor will recommend treatment straight away.

