



Scoliosis

What Is Scoliosis?

Scoliosis is a sideways curve of the spine that develops as a child grows. Instead of growing perfectly straight, the spine curves or twists slightly, creating an uneven appearance. The most common type is **idiopathic scoliosis**, meaning there's no known cause. While research suggests genetics and growth patterns play a role, the exact reason why some children develop scoliosis remains unclear. What we do know is that it can be effectively monitored and treated when detected early.

Symptoms

Most children with scoliosis have **no pain or nerve symptoms**—the signs are usually physical. Parents may notice:

- One shoulder or hip higher than the other
- A curve in the waistline or trunk that appears shifted
- Uneven ribs or shoulder blades when the child bends forward

These changes are often found during a routine physical exam like a well child exam or a sports physical, or through school screening.

Screening and Diagnosis

Screening is done annually at your child's well child exam. Additionally, we screen during pre-participation sports physicals. Screening helps detect curves early and diagnosis is confirmed through a **physical exam**. **X-rays of the spine** may be indicated to measure the degree of curvature.

Treatment Options

Treatment depends on two main factors:

1. **How much growth a child has left**
2. **How large the spinal curve is**
 - **Mild curves** are usually monitored with periodic x-rays and physical exams. Often a referral to a pediatric orthopedist is recommended for additional monitoring.
 - **Moderate to severe curves** are managed by a pediatric orthopedist. Fortunately, **most children never need surgery**—fewer than 5% of scoliosis patients do. The majority are simply followed with observation or bracing until they finish growing.

Supporting Your Child

A scoliosis diagnosis can sound concerning, but it's actually very manageable—and we know exactly what to do. Our team and local specialists work together to monitor your child's growth and spine health. With regular check-ins and the right care plan, most kids with scoliosis stay healthy, active, and live completely normal lives.