

# Scheuermann's Disease



## What Is Scheuermann's Disease?

Scheuermann's disease, or Scheuermann's kyphosis, is a condition in which a child has too much curvature (or kyphosis) in the middle of the back.

Kyphosis typically occurs during periods of accelerated growth. If the front of the spine doesn't grow as quickly as the back of the spine, the vertebrae become wedge-shaped. This change in shape causes the middle of the spine to curve forward abnormally, leading to a rounded or stooped posture.



## What Causes Scheuermann's Disease?

Although the cause of Scheuermann's disease is unknown, the condition seems to run in families. Roughly 4 to 8 percent of people have it, and it occurs in males twice as often as in females. Approximately 20 to 30 percent of patients who have Scheuermann's disease also develop [scoliosis](#).



## Scheuermann's Disease Symptoms and Effects

Symptoms of Scheuermann's disease typically develop between ages 10 and 15, while bones are still growing.

The most common symptoms of the condition are:

- Fatigue.
- Back pain.
- Tight hamstrings.
- Rigid curvature of the spine (kyphosis).
- Loss of flexibility.
- Slouching, or posture that gets worse over time.

In severe cases, Scheuermann's disease can affect breathing or injure the spinal cord. The condition also might also increase the likelihood of developing arthritis of the back later in life.



## Scheuermann's Disease Diagnosis and Treatment

If you think your child has Scheuermann's disease, specialists start by reviewing medical history and test results, and performing a physical exam.

A diagnosis is given if:

- Three vertebrae in a row show wedging of 5 degrees or more.
- The angle of the curvature of the spine (kyphosis) is 50 degrees or more.

Tests used to diagnose Scheuermann's disease might include:

- **X-ray:** X-rays taken from the side help show if any vertebrae are wedged.
- **MRI:** MRIs show detailed images of affected vertebrae, as well as surrounding tissues and the spinal cord.
- **CT scan:** If needed, a CT scan can offer a more detailed view of the vertebrae.

Your child might receive treatment for Scheuermann's disease to relieve pain, correct abnormal curvature of the spine, or prevent a curvature from worsening.

Kyphosis treatment varies depending on:

- The age of your child.
- The severity of the curvature (kyphosis).
- The preferences of you and your child.

## Observation

Even if your child has Scheuermann's disease, they may not necessarily need treatment. Monitoring might be sufficient. However, if pain or decreased function becomes a problem, other treatments might help.

## Physical Therapy

If your child experiences pain, **physical therapy** can help strengthen muscles and improve flexibility, which can in turn help with pain management. However, kyphosis exercises alone won't reduce abnormal curvature of the spine.

## Anti-Inflammatory Medicines

If pain becomes a problem for your child, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medicines (NSAIDs) might help.

## Bracing

In some cases, your child might benefit from a kyphosis back brace to prevent the curvature from worsening. Bracing typically holds the spine straight during growth and prevents the kyphosis from progressing in children younger than 14. If your child wears the kyphosis brace consistently, the curvature is usually corrected after two years.

## Surgery

If nonsurgical treatments don't help reduce your child's pain, [surgery](#) might be necessary. At Gillette Children's we might recommend surgery to improve spine alignment. We might also recommend surgery to relieve pressure on the spinal cord that limits function or damages nerves.



## Integrated Care

If your child has Scheuermann's disease, the internationally recognized specialists at Gillette will create a customized plan that fits your child's unique needs.

Your child might receive care and treatment from experts in the following areas:

- [Orthopedics.](#)
- [Orthotics.](#)
- [Radiology and imaging.](#)
- [Rehabilitation medicine.](#)
- [Rehabilitation therapies,](#) including [physical therapy.](#)
- [Child life.](#)

Your family can count on our team of orthopedic specialists to treat complex conditions related to Scheuermann's, including osteochondritis dissecans. We welcome the involvement of primary care providers, teachers, and school and community therapists.

**Appointment: 651-290-8707**

**Refer a Patient: 651-325-2200**

**Pediatric Expert Consult (<https://www.gillettechildrens.org/conditions-care/pediatric-expert-consult>)**

**More Ways to Contact Us (<https://www.gillettechildrens.org><https://www.gillettechildrens.org/contact-us>)**

This information is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice of your health care providers. If you have any questions, talk with your doctor or others on your health care team.

If you are a Gillette patient with urgent questions or concerns, please contact Telehealth Nursing at [651-229-3890](tel:651-229-3890).