

What Is Scoliosis?

Scoliosis is a sideways curve of the spine. This is a common condition that can leave the spine looking like an “S” or a “C,” rather than a straight line down the back. Some curves in the spine are normal and help with balance and the ability to stand upright—it is a sideways curvature of the spine that indicates scoliosis.

Scoliosis usually isn't life-threatening and children who have it can live normal and active lives. There is no known way to prevent scoliosis, however, treatment can help the condition from getting worse. Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare offers several options for scoliosis treatment.



Types of Scoliosis

Scoliosis in children, infants, teens and adults includes a curvature of the spine, but the amount or degree of the curve can vary greatly. There are several types, each ranging from mild scoliosis to severe scoliosis.

- **Idiopathic scoliosis:** The most common form is often called adolescent scoliosis and accounts for 85 percent of all cases. “Idiopathic” means the cause is unknown.
- **Neuromuscular scoliosis:** Children who have conditions such as spina bifida, **cerebral palsy**, muscular dystrophy or other **neuromuscular conditions** can have abnormal muscles or nerves, and when the muscles and nerves that support the spine are imbalanced or weak, it can lead to neuromuscular scoliosis.
- **Congenital scoliosis:** This relatively rare form of scoliosis starts as the spine forms before a child is born—sometimes spinal bones aren't fully formed, or sometimes vertebrae are fused together. Even though this type of scoliosis is present at birth, it might go undetected until your child is a teen.
- **Juvenile scoliosis:** Another uncommon form, this type develops during childhood.
- **Degenerative scoliosis:** This form typically develops later in life as joints in the spine wear down or develop osteoporosis, but it can result from injuries or previous back surgery.

What Causes Scoliosis?

Research shows that the most common type of scoliosis (idiopathic) frequently runs in families. Evidence suggests that genetics play a role. However, some children with scoliosis have no relatives with the condition.

Because idiopathic scoliosis causes are unknown, there are some common misconceptions about what causes it.

Idiopathic scoliosis is **not** caused by:

- Bad posture.
- Limb-length differences.
- Sports activities.
- Heavy backpacks.
- Injury.

Learn about the symptoms that can indicate scoliosis.

Make An Appointment [**651-290-8707**](tel:651-290-8707) Refer a Patient [**651-325-2200**](tel:651-325-2200)

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).