The Research Team at Gillette Children’s is examining how effective nighttime bracing is in adolescents with idiopathic scoliosis. Idiopathic scoliosis means that we do not know why the spine is curved. Many adolescents with idiopathic scoliosis are asked to wear a scoliosis brace most hours of the day until they stop growing.

Having an adolescent wear a brace between 18-20 hours a day can be challenging. Between school and social events, it can be emotionally and physically draining. An alternative option is a nighttime brace, which is a brace worn only at night that may be effective for some adolescents with idiopathic scoliosis. Nighttime bracing as a treatment option could help reduce daily difficulties for these adolescents and their families.

“I started using night-time braces after a specific patient and their mother approached me about any other options besides bracing 18 hours a day. They were fighting all the time about the brace and both mom and daughter were mentally drained,” Walter Truong, pediatric orthopedic and spine surgeon, said.

“I had recently reviewed the literature on nighttime bracing, and although there were no high-level studies, I did offer it to this family based on the limited research available. They did so well with it that I continued to prescribe the brace in specific situations. I have also dedicated a significant part of my research efforts to nighttime bracing,” Dr. Truong continued.

Ongoing research is focused on how to best design a study on nighttime bracing that is meaningful to patients, families, and
their health care providers. We know that keeping the curve from growing is important, but we also want to learn how bracing affects the daily lives of patients and their families. That means that we have had lots of conversations with patients and their parents to hear about their experiences and learn about the outcomes that are most important to them.

The team at Gillette Children's is extremely passionate about this, which has encouraged collaboration between our physicians, advanced practice providers and orthotists. They are experts in this field and looking to find answers to better help our patients.