What is Scoliosis?

Scoliosis is an abnormal curve of the spine. Named for the word meaning “a crookedness,” scoliosis refers to a twisted position of the bones along the characterizing scoliosis. In most cases, the cause is unknown. About two to three percent of children have scoliosis. Most will not have negative effects, but some children will develop problems later in life if the condition goes undetected when they are young.

Scoliosis causing physical deformity that affects posture and self-image. Severe cases of untreated scoliosis can lead to painful arthritis, low back pain, and even heart or lung problems.

What is Involved in Screen for Scoliosis?

The way to learn whether your child may have scoliosis is with an annual screening between the ages of 10 and 14 through your child’s school or local school. In Georgia, scoliosis screenings are required at least two grades – sixth, seventh, or eighth. Screening is a simple, painless process that only takes about 30 seconds. Girls may wear bathing suits during the screening, boys simply take off their shirts. A trained screener observes the child’s spine – first with the child in a standing position and then with the child bending forward and backward. The screener looks for curvature and asymmetry of the shoulder blades and lower back. If the child’s back, shoulders, or hips appear uneven, the screener will recommend follow-up to determine if scoliosis is present. A small fraction of children screened require a referral. Most referred children require follow-up at six months or one year. Fortunately, only a few need treatment such as bracing or surgery.

What if My Child Doesn’t Want to be Screened?

Children between the ages of 10 and 14 are often self-conscious about their bodies and may try to avoid scoliosis screenings at school. Reassure them that each screening is done individually and that their privacy is respected. Girls may wear shirts over their bathing suits while waiting for their turn to be screened. You can be understanding, but help your child see that the benefits of scoliosis screening far outweigh any uncomfortable feelings.

What if Scoliosis is Suspected?

Keep in mind that screening only identifies children who may have scoliosis. They will need to go to the doctor or the scoliosis screening clinic for full evaluation (look right for more information). Only a physician can diagnose scoliosis through examination and X-rays. The earlier scoliosis is treated, the better the treatment options and outcome.

Spinal Screening Procedure

The presence of one or more of these findings requires further evaluation.

For more information call 404.651.7551.