

Health Services
Scoliosis Information and Screening

What is Scoliosis

Scoliosis is an abnormal curvature of the spine, usually creating an “S” or “C” shape to the spine. It is more common in girls than boys and usually occurs during a major growth spurt between the ages of 10 – 18. The cause, in the majority of the cases, is unknown and most do not require treatment. Scoliosis is detected by a simple alignment test during a regular health physical or screening. Progressive, untreated scoliosis can lead to limited range of motion, back pain, headaches, deformity, and in extreme cases impaired function of the heart and lungs.

Screening Your Child for Scoliosis

Have your child stand erect in front of you with their arms at their sides. Stand about 10 feet back and look for the following:

- Is one shoulder higher than the other?
- Does one hip look higher than the other?
- Is there more space between the arm and the body on one side?
- Is the head centered over the pelvis or does it tilt to one side?

With your child’s back to you, have him/her bend down like they are going to touch their toes and look for the following:

- Is one shoulder blade higher or protrude more than the other?
- Is one side of the back higher than the other?
- Is one hip higher than the other?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, then take your child to their Health Care Provider for further evaluation.

Diagnosis and Treatment of Scoliosis

Diagnosis is made using x-ray to determine the curvature of the spine. The Scoliosis Research Society defines scoliosis as a curvature of the spine measuring 10 degrees or greater on x-ray. The following are the most common treatment options:

- **Observation and repeat examinations.** This is the treatment of choice for small, abnormal curves. Close monitoring is required during accelerated growth periods.
- **Bracing.** This is used when the curve measures between 25 – 40 degrees on x-ray and skeletal growth remains.
- **Surgery.** This is recommended when the curve is severe, over 50 degrees on x-ray.

Message to Parents

The best way to ensure your child does not have scoliosis is by getting yearly well child physicals. Early treatment is necessary to decrease the risk of problems associated with scoliosis. For any questions or concerns regarding the information in this handout, please contact your school nurse.

***Berkeley Glenn Elementary - 946-4680, Wenonah Elementary - 946-4660, Westwood Elementary -946-4670
William Perry Elementary - 946-4650, Kate Collins Middle School - 946-4635, Ext 1025
Waynesboro High School - 946-4616 Wayne Hills Pre-K Center – 946-4626,***