

The Wellness Express™

Jump on the train to good health

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Chiropractic: A Non-surgical Approach to Scoliosis

Presented by:

Introduction

Scoliosis is an abnormal curving of the spine, such that the spine resembles either the letter “C” or “S” when viewed from behind. Most people have a completely straight spine from side to side with natural curves in the neck and lower back but individuals with scoliosis have excessive spinal curvature and in unusual directions. Chiropractic care can be helpful in treating this condition and keeping any symptoms or discomfort at bay.

According to a 2001 article published in the *Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics*, most chiropractors use similar methods to treat scoliosis, including specific functional exercises and joint manipulation, as well as similar treatment frequency and duration.¹ Your chiropractor is a musculoskeletal health expert who understands how to treat scoliosis using natural, non-surgical means.

In this edition of the Wellness Express we explore the topic of scoliosis in greater detail, including the chiropractic approach and how it can help.

What is Scoliosis?

As mentioned above, scoliosis is a

sideways curving of the spine and it occurs most commonly in girls during the growth spurt immediately before puberty. The Scoliosis Association states that about 10 percent of all teens have some degree of scoliosis.²



Though scoliosis is found in both boys and girls; the condition is more likely to progress in girls. Scoliosis can be classified as either idiopathic (i.e., arising spontaneously from an unknown cause) or congenital (i.e., existing from birth).

The majority of scoliosis cases - greater than 80 percent, according to the American Chiropractic Association (ACA) - are idiopathic.³ In some cases, contributing factors to scoliosis may include postural problems, muscles spasms and leg-length discrepancies. Not everybody who has scoliosis experiences pain or discomfort but scoliosis can cause pain, reduce lung and heart function and lower

Exercise of the Week

Seated Glute Stretch (Figure 4)

Difficulty: Easy to moderate

(Consult your chiropractor before doing this or any other exercise)

Start: Seated on a chair.

Exercise: Place one ankle on opposite knee. Then, bend forward until you feel a good stretch in hip. Also relax lower back in this position. Hold for 30-60 seconds, and then return to starting position. Switch sides, and repeat 2X per side.



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quality of life (due to a limiting of activity). The ACA notes that about 4 out of 5 people with scoliosis have curves less than 20 degrees - a situation in which scoliosis tends not to progress or cause serious problems.

Who Develops Scoliosis?

Scoliosis is a common health problem, affecting about 2 to 3 percent of people in the United States, notes the National Scoliosis Foundation.⁴ Scoliosis can occur at any age, but it most commonly develops in boys and girls - mostly girls - between the ages of 10 and 15. Scoliosis can be inherited, and it is common for adolescents whose parents and siblings are affected to develop scoliosis as well. Adults may also develop abnormal spinal curves, though it is less common than in adolescents. According to the Scoliosis Research Society, possible factors leading to scoliosis in adults include wear and tear changes in the spine, deformities that appear later in life, osteoporosis, old fractures, slipped vertebrae and infections.⁵

The Chiropractic Perspective

Chiropractic care offers a comprehensive approach to the management of scoliosis. Many chiropractors use specific joints adjustments, soft tissue work and functional exercises to help relieve scoliosis-related symptoms and prevent a progression of the condition. New research indicates that a well-rounded chiropractic treatment approach may have lasting health benefits for individuals with scoliosis. According to a 2011 study published in the *Journal of Chiropractic Medicine*, 28 scoliosis patients receiving chiropractic rehabilitation treatment

experienced reductions in pain and disability (as well as beneficial changes in spinal curves) up to 24 months after treatment.

Chiropractors try to identify early changes in spinal curvature to help halt potential progression and symptoms in susceptible individuals. Early intervention is extremely important in chiropractic scoliosis treatment. In mainstream health care, scoliosis is often left unaddressed until significant cosmetic and structural changes have occurred, which makes it difficult to control the condition without aggressive and invasive treatments (such as bracing or surgery).

Some of the most common approaches used by chiropractors to help treat or prevent a worsening of scoliosis include gentle, focused spinal adjustments, physical therapy modalities (such as electrical muscle stimulation), specific home stretching and strengthening exercises, exercises to improve posture, breathing exercises and foot care (to ensure a stable base of support for the spine).

Conclusion

Your chiropractor understands the intricacies of scoliosis and how best to care for your spine. If you are concerned about scoliosis, or if other family members have been diagnosed with this health problem, consider visiting your chiropractor for a full and thorough spinal examination. Your chiropractor can give you the care you need and the exercises that will keep your scoliosis from progressing.

Quote to Inspire

“Try to be like the turtle – at ease within your own shell”

Bill Copeland

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