

Information for patients
Scoliosis



Alice Ward

What is Spinal Scoliosis?

Scoliosis is a change in the shape of the spine. The spine can curve and twist which can lead to changes in the shape of your ribcage and waist.

There are three main causes for a curve:

- Congenital (present at birth)
- Neuromuscular (caused by a condition like cerebral palsy or muscular dystrophy)
- Idiopathic (the cause is unknown) In 80% of cases, the cause is unknown

Pain

Most of the time scoliosis does not cause pain. When back pain is present with scoliosis, it is not usually caused by the curve itself but it may cause some stress and pressure on the muscles and ligaments. However, many children and adolescents experience back pain due to growing pains, over use and muscular strains, which typically resolve with time, stretching, and occasional medications when needed.

Treatment options

The recommended treatment for scoliosis will depend on age, how severe the curve is, and whether it's predicted to get worse over time.

Monitoring

Treatment is not always necessary and careful monitoring by a specialist with regular examinations and X-rays to observe the curve maybe all that is needed.

Bracing

The Boston Brace is worn by people with scoliosis to prevent their spine from curving as they grow. It uses the hips as a base point, goes up to the shoulder blades and pushes in at padded pressure points to hold the spine in a straighter position. This won't correct the curve but will attempt to prevent the curve from getting worse.

The brace is made of rigid plastic, is custom made to each person's body and is designed to be difficult to see under loose fitting clothing. The brace is usually worn for 20hrs a day, only needing to be removed for baths, showers, swimming and contact sports. The brace shouldn't interfere with most everyday activities.



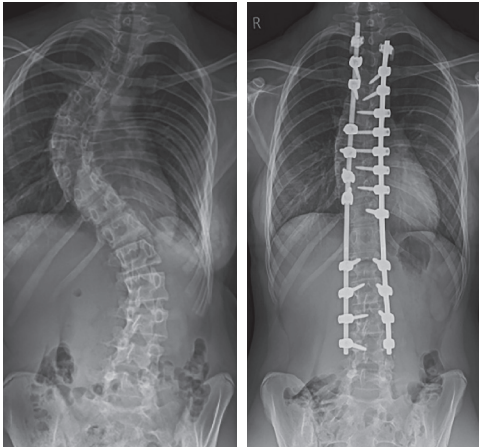
Surgery

Surgery may be recommended if your curve is severe or, predicted to become severe as you grow. The type of surgery offered will depend on your age.

Teenagers and adults who have stopped growing can have an operation called spinal fusion to correct the curve. This is a major operation where the spine is straightened using metal rods and screws which remain in position permanently.

Most people spend around 5–7 days in hospital after their operation. They can return to school after a few weeks and play sports after a few months, although they may need to avoid contact sports for a little longer.

If surgery is recommended, you will have a detailed discussion about the surgery with your doctor and be informed of the risk and benefits of the surgery to help you decide if you want it.



Before

After

Support

Scoliosis Association UK (SAUK) is the only UK wide patient support organisation for people with scoliosis and their families. They provide up-to-date information on scoliosis and related health matters. There is also a helpline where people can call or email for advice, support or just talk to someone. SAUK Helpline is manned between Monday and Friday from 9.30am to 5.30pm.

Helpline: [020 8964 1166](tel:02089641166)

Email: info@sauk.org.uk

Website: sauk.org.uk

If you require a special edition of this leaflet

This leaflet is available in large print. Arrangements can also be made on request for it to be explained in your preferred language. Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) email: rjah.pals.office@nhs.net

Feedback

Tell us what you think of our patient information leaflet. Please send your comments to the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) email: rjah.pals.office@nhs.net

Contact

Spinal Nurse Specialist: Dan Rowlands
Tel: **01691 404489**
Alice Ward: **01691 404444**

Date of publication: November 2023
Date of review: November 2025
Author: Dan Rowlands
© RJAH Trust 2023

The Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt
Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Founda-
tion Trust,
Oswestry, Shropshire SY10 7AG
Tel: **01691 404000**
www.rjah.nhs.uk