Scoliosis is an abnormal curve or twist of the spine. Approximately two to three percent of school-aged children have scoliosis. Less than one percent have curves that require treatment, but early detection for these is important. Since there are very few signs or symptoms in the early stages, screenings are extremely important. At Scottish Rite Hospital, we offer an all in-house, individualized treatment plan that begins by evaluating each child in a team-based approach.

When should my child be screened for scoliosis?

These screenings should begin in early adolescence so that treatment can start while the child is still growing. Pediatricians should check for early signs of abnormal spinal curves at each well-child visit. In addition, Texas school nurses conduct spinal screens for all students by the time they complete 6th and 9th grades.

What is a spinal screen?

Typical screenings include a quick look at the spine and ribs in both a standing and a bending forward position. In addition to the spine curving sideways, it also twists, making the ribs, which are attached to the spine, look uneven.

What happens when the screen suggests possible scoliosis?

When a child has a positive screening, X-rays of the spine are often recommended. This allows for an accurate measurement of any and all curves.

How is scoliosis treated?

Treatment depends on how big the curve is and how much growth is left. Some curves do not need treatment, and for some, bracing may be recommended. The curves are checked by the doctor as the child grows. With certain signs and symptoms surgery may be appropriate, but this is uncommon in healthy children.

Research at Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children

Research at Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children has shown that when a brace is the appropriate treatment, those who wear the brace as directed have a lower risk of needing surgery. Because of this, our braces often have a monitor to track when it is worn. Innovations in care, like the brace monitor, are what make Scottish Rite Hospital a leader in the field of pediatric and adolescent scoliosis.

If your child needs a follow-up appointment with a pediatric orthopedic specialist, your provider or school nurse can call 214-559-7477 to make a referral. Visit our website to learn more about scoliosis and our ongoing research.