

## HOW TO SCREEN YOUR CHILD FOR A SPINAL DEFORMITY

You would have often comes across people who have an unsightly deformity of the back. Did you know that early detection and treatment could have easily prevented the deformity?

When viewing the back directly from behind, the spine is straight, the shoulders even, hips level and the distance between the arms and the body equal. Scoliosis is defined as an abnormal lateral curvature of the spine of 10 degrees or more. The lateral curvature is associated with a rotation in the spinal column which causes the ribs attached to the vertebra to rotate. Thus a side to side, “S” shaped curve is associated with a rib hump. Eighty-five percent of all cases of scoliosis have no known cause and are referred to as idiopathic scoliosis. It occurs in two to three percent of the adolescent population. It commonly affects young people between the ages of 10 to 16 years of age.

Kyphosis, or roundback deformity, is described as an excessive curvature of the spine when viewed from the side. The cause for this type of deformity is unknown.

Deformities can go unnoticed in a young person because they are rarely painful in the formative years. They worsen with time and can result in serious problems such as unsightly appearance, back pain, and in the worst cases, interference with heart and lung function. In addition, some types of deformities, especially kyphosis can cause progressive paralysis due to pressure on the spinal cord. Hence the importance of early detection through spinal screening.

You could screen your child yourself by viewing him/her in the following positions:

- Standing position viewed from front - check if there is difference in shoulder height, space from arm to the side of the body, waist creases or hip levels
- Standing position viewed from back - check for above as well as any curve in the spine
- Bending forward with the palms of both hands touching until the back is horizontal - check for uneven contours, humps on one side, curve in the spine.
- Bending forward and viewed from the back - check as above
- Bending forward and touching upper shins or feet viewed from the side - check for uneven contours, humps on one side and flexibility
- Standing position viewed from the side - check for exaggerated roundness in upper back or exaggerated arch in lower back.