

Dr. Colin Gage

Nicola Valley Chiropractic
2076A Granite Ave.
P.O. Box 909
Merritt, BC
V1K 1B8

Ph: (250) 378-5456
Fax: (250) 378-8259
Email: info@merrittchiro.com
Website: www.merrittchiro.com

"treating the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms"

What is Scoliosis?

Everyone's spine has natural curves. These curves make our upper back curve slightly outward (convex) and our lower back curve slightly inward (concave). But, some people have spines that also curve from side to side or left to right. Unlike poor posture, these curves can't be corrected simply by learning to stand up straight.

This condition of side-to-side spinal curves is called "scoliosis". On a front to back x-ray, the spine of an individual with scoliosis looks more like an "S" rather than a straight line. In most cases, the "vertebrae" or bones in the spine may also have rotated slightly, making the person's waist or shoulders appear uneven.

Scoliosis affects a small percentage of the population, approximately 2 percent. Scoliosis can also run in families. If someone in a family has scoliosis, the likelihood of it occurring in one or more of their children is 20 percent higher than normal. If someone in your family has curvature of the spine, everyone should be examined for scoliosis by a chiropractor.

The vast majority of scoliosis is "idiopathic," meaning its cause is unknown. It usually develops in middle or late childhood, before puberty, and is seen more often in girls than boys. Though scoliosis can occur in children with cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, spinal bifida, and other miscellaneous conditions, most scoliosis is found in otherwise healthy youngsters. If severe cases are allowed to progress, scoliosis can lead to chronic severe back pain, deformity, and difficulty in breathing.

Early detection of scoliosis is very important. Idiopathic scoliosis can go unnoticed in a child because it is rarely painful in the formative years.

Therefore, parents should watch for the following "tip-offs" to scoliosis beginning when their child is about 8 years of age:

- uneven shoulders
- prominent shoulder blade or shoulder blades
- uneven waist
- elevated hips
- leaning to one side

Any one of these signs warrants an examination by a chiropractor.

There is no proven conservative treatment will eliminate scoliosis. The most common plan of management is to monitor it. The younger the age it shows up and the faster it progresses is what really matters. Generally, once the child reaches puberty or when their bones stop growing, the scoliosis will stop progressing.

Before and after the curve stops progressing, the spine will have abnormal curves, which leads to increased stress on the joints between the vertebrae. This typically results in stiff and painful regions of the spine. This is where chiropractic treatment can play an active role in the management of scoliosis. The goal of the chiropractic treatment is to restore the normal movement to the stiff and painful joints of a spine with scoliosis, not to "reverse" the abnormal curves. All you can do is make the abnormal areas of the spine work as efficiently as possible by seeing a chiropractor regularly and remain physically active between visits.