

# Dr. Colin Gage

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

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## Scoliosis and Back Pain

The diagnosis of scoliosis is made when a person has abnormal twisting and curving of the spine. It affects females twice as often as males. It can commence before the teen years and can progress rapidly or very slowly until the age of 17 or 18 when a person's bones finish growing. A simple examination by a Chiropractor may allow for an early diagnosis. If necessary, an x-ray may be taken to measure the amount of curvature. Later, further x-rays may be taken to compare the amount of curvature to the original x-ray. The true cause of scoliosis is still a mystery. To date, there is no truly curative surgical or non-surgical cure for the problem. In severe cases, drastic surgery may be required but this is rare and will eventually lead to secondary problems over time.

Most of the scoliosis cases I see in my practice are in full-grown adults. The curves were present since their childhood and have stopped progressing since their late teens. These people rarely come into my office looking to "correct" their abnormal curves. They are coming to see me to address the pain and stiffness that develops in these abnormal areas.

It should seem logical that problems are likely to arise when you have abnormal twists and curves in the spine. At and around the twisted and curved areas, the joints between the bones or "vertebrae" of the spine lose some of their potential movement. This makes these joints more prone to becoming stiff or "jammed". Whenever this occurs, swelling or inflammation can occur around the joint, which irritates the nerves exiting the spine. As I explained last week, these nerves control the muscles along the spine. The result is that the irritated nerves create painful muscle spasms. This scenario of a tight joint, inflammation, nerve irritation, and muscle spasm is collectively called a "SUBLUXATION" by chiropractors.

To relieve the symptoms of a person with scoliosis, chiropractors do a series of "adjustments" or "manipulation" to restore the proper movement of the joints located within the abnormal curves of the spine. Once this has been done, less frequent but just as important treatments may be necessary to maintain that proper joint movement until the inflammation, nerve irritation, and resulting muscle spasm decreases. In most cases, the abnormal curves and twisting of the spine are permanent. Therefore, patients with this problem should see their chiropractor regularly so that the movement in their spinal joints is maintained. Stretching exercises are also important to help maintain good movement in

the spine. For an example, log onto our website ([www.merrittchiro.com](http://www.merrittchiro.com)) and look for “free stretches and exercises”. Then click onto “low back stretches” and print them off.