



Dear Parents/Guardians:

Screening of public school children for scoliosis (curvature of the spine) is required by Florida Law. The District School Board of Collier County and the Collier County Health Department provide annual scoliosis screening for students in grade 6. If your child is currently under treatment for a back problem, they do not need to participate in the screening program. Simply provide your child's school with any pertinent medical information by sending a note to the attention of the health screening contact in the school. You can obtain the specific dates for the screening by contacting the school office.

What is scoliosis? It is an abnormal side-to-side curvature of the back that usually begins during adolescence and can become worse during a person's growing years. In most cases the cause is unknown. At first there are rarely any symptoms. If the condition is found in the early stages and treatment is started, most deformity can be prevented.

The procedure for screening students is simple. A nurse looks at the student's back as he or she first stands upright and then bends forward. The nurse conducting the screening has been trained to observe for a curvature of the spine, a high hip or shoulder, or a rib hump. If any abnormality is suspected, the student will then be re-screened by a physical therapist. If the therapist also determines that there is the possibility that the student may have an abnormality, a referral letter will be sent home to you recommending that your child be evaluated by your family doctor or pediatrician. Referring a student for medical evaluation does not mean that scoliosis has been detected. Only a physician can diagnose scoliosis and recommend treatment.

If you have any questions concerning your child's participation in this program you may contact the school office at 239-377-8200.

Sincerely,

Angela Lettiere

Principal

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WHAT IS SCOLIOSIS?

Scoliosis is a lateral or side to side curvature of the spine. Normally, the spine curves slightly from front to back, but has no sideways curvature and looks perfectly straight when viewed from the back. Scoliosis can be so mild that the curvature is hardly noticeable, or so severe, that the spine begins to look like the letter "S". Scoliosis usually begins during adolescence and at first there are rarely any symptoms.

HOW IS IT NOTICED?

One common sign of scoliosis is a high shoulder or hip. The upper back may be more prominent on one side. These signs are not always pronounced and may be easily camouflaged by the bad posture habits common to teenagers. Often, the first indication that something is wrong is an awareness that clothing doesn't fit properly. If a nurse and physical therapist in school determine that there is the possibility that the student may have an abnormality, a referral letter will be sent recommending evaluation by a family doctor or pediatrician. Referring a student for medical evaluation never means that scoliosis has been determined, only that a possible abnormality is suspected. A true diagnosis of scoliosis must be made by a qualified medical doctor.

WHAT CAUSES SCOLIOSIS?

In some cases, scoliosis can be attributed to a disease of the bones or muscles; but in the majority (about 85%) no cause can be found. It is important that a medical doctor examine the student to determine if scoliosis is present; and if it is, to be certain that it is not a symptom of something more serious. Scoliosis doesn't develop as a result of anything you or your parents do or don't do.

WHAT PROBLEMS CAN SCOLIOSIS CAUSE?

In many children, scoliosis is very mild and does not get worse. However, in some children, untreated scoliosis progresses and may lead to shortness of stature, visible deformity of the back and back pain. A deformed chest can also squeeze the heart and lungs. In the most severe cases, scoliosis can be life threatening.

CAN SCOLIOSIS BE CURED?

There are no magical cures for treating scoliosis. Scoliosis is a condition that sometimes calls for long-term corrective measures. The following are some methods used to treat scoliosis:

- **Observation:** Most children who are suspected of having a spinal curve will normally need at least periodic observation by a doctor to make sure that even a suspected mild spinal curve that is diagnosed during screening does not get any worse.
- **Bracing:** When a spinal curve is determined to be increasing (getting worse) or is detected in a moderately advanced stage (severe curvature) it may be treated with a brace. The purpose of the brace is to keep the spinal curve from getting any worse.
- **Bracing plus an exercise program:** In some instances exercises combined with a brace can be an effective method of controlling advancing progression of scoliosis.
- **Surgery:** Because of the success of early detection and treatment, surgery is only needed in a small percentage of children with scoliosis. Surgery is performed to fuse the spine. It may be the only way to stop the progression of a curve in a child where the curvature is already too advanced to respond to a brace or when a child may have been born with a spinal defect that either does not respond to a brace or other treatments.