

Orthopaedic Connection

Kyphosis (Spine Curvature)

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

Remember when you were young and your parents would nag you to "stand up straight"? If you have children you probably have said this yourself to your own kids. All this nagging and pleading stems from worries parents have that their children will develop a rounded or hunched back from constantly slouching.

What Is Normal?

Some degree of curvature to the spine is normal looking from the side. There is a normal gentle convex curve to the back. The spine is not supposed to be completely straight. The normal gentle curve in the upper back (dorsal or thoracic area) is complimented by a gentle concave curve in the lower back or lumbar area.

What is Abnormal?

Kyphosis is the term used when the curve is exaggerated. Postural kyphosis or rounded back usually develops during adolescence and is more common among girls than boys.

Several Types of Kyphosis

- **Postural Kyphosis**
Slouching and poor posture stretch spinal ligaments increasing the natural curve. It is rarely painful. Exercises taught and done faithfully can strengthen the abdomen and back and stretch the hamstrings. This can correct postural kyphosis.
- **Congenital Kyphosis**
In some infants the spinal column is not developing properly. Bones do not form correctly or there may be a bar between bones. It can continue to worsen, must be evaluated and surgery is usually needed.
- **Scheuermann's Kyphosis**
It is named after a Danish radiologist that described it. It comes on during teen years and causes wedging of the bone

easily seen on x-rays. It is more common in boys. Physical activity or long periods of sitting or standing can cause pain.

- Adult Kyphosis

Older persons have round back due to osteoporosis that weakens the bones causing them to collapse slowly perhaps even without causing any pain.

Treatment

Management of course depends on the reason for the curvature. There is a wide range all the way from home exercises, to medication, bracing and even surgery in rare cases.

Back problems in children and adolescents can be very serious and have terrible consequences if not properly treated.

Correct diagnosis and management are the keystone of care. I can't encourage you strongly enough to seek proper care for these children.

Please consult our office teaching website www.orthopodsurgeon.com and Your Orthopaedic Connection for much more information about back problems in children and all the other things I treat in the office and hospital.

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free, functional lives. I specialize in you.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush