

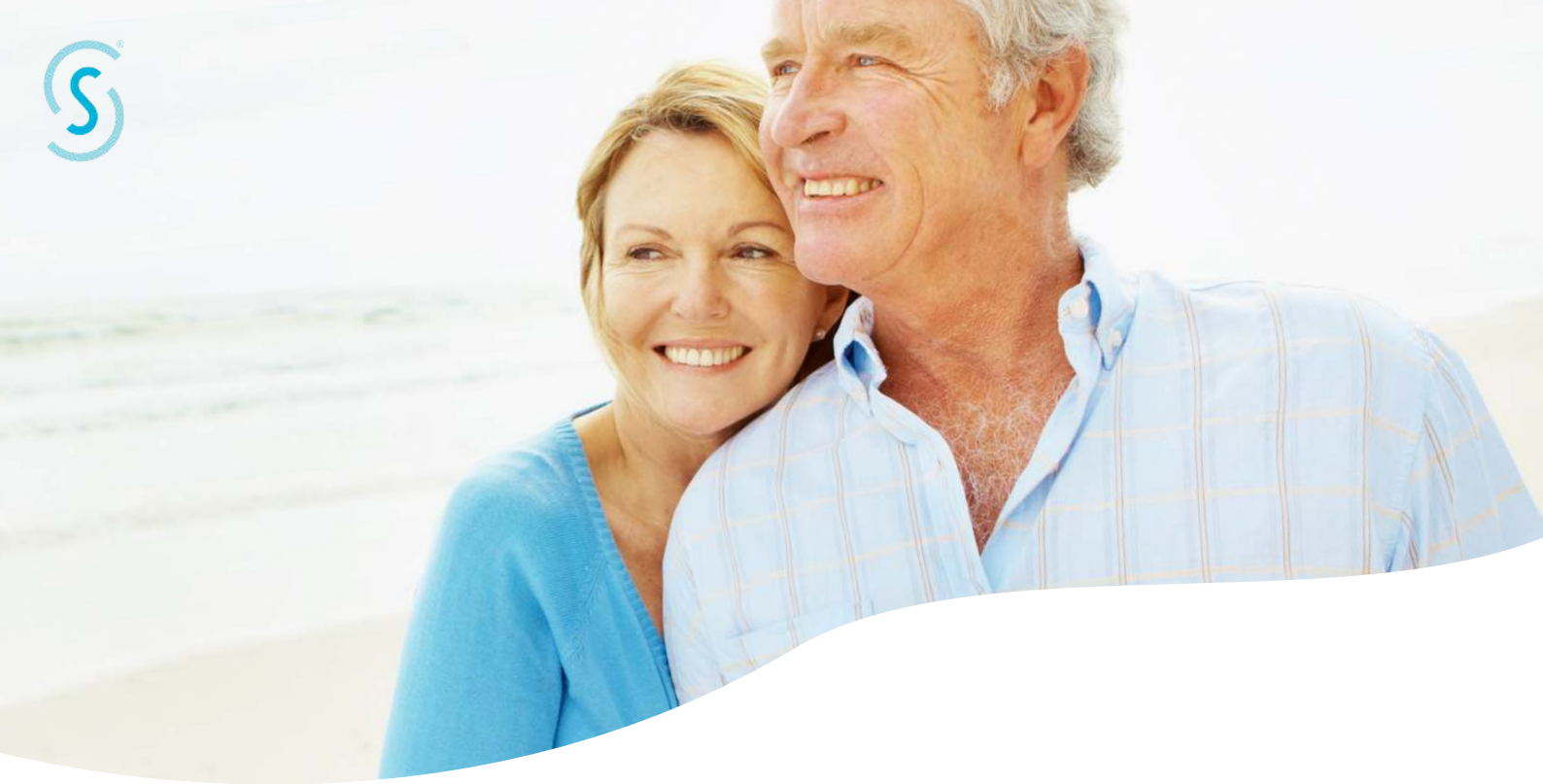


Scoliosis Knows No Age Limit

A Guide to
Understanding
Adult Scoliosis



(239) 513-9004
www.scolicare.com/naples-florida



You may remember as a student, the annual checks for scoliosis, performed by the school nurse. In most schools, these have now been phased out. However, often this is the only memory an adult may have of hearing about scoliosis, until they encounter it later in life.

Scoliosis is a progressive, lateral curvature of the spine. When viewed from the side, the spine should have curves however, when viewed from the back, the spine should be straight.

Typically someone is diagnosed as having scoliosis if the curve is measured on an X-ray at 10 degrees or more combined with rotation of the vertebrae/spine. This measurement is known as the Cobb angle of the scoliosis curve.

Scoliosis can affect people of all ages, from infants and children, to adolescents and adults. It may also be more common than you think, affecting approximately 5% of young people¹ and up to 68% of over 60's.²

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When I was told I had scoliosis, I was a bit annoyed ... I knew of teenagers who had that.

No-one had ever used those words to me.

Robyn, Patient (56 years old)

While being diagnosed with scoliosis at any age, can be a challenging time, the realization as an adult can come as a shock.

Discovering you have scoliosis as an adult can be a complex and challenging experience with a range of physical and emotional factors involved.



Understanding Adult Scoliosis

This eBook serves as your roadmap to better understand scoliosis related to adults.

Perhaps you or a loved one might have been previously diagnosed with scoliosis, or you'd just like to have a greater understanding of the condition.

This eBook will cover various aspects of adult scoliosis, including types, symptoms, how to diagnose and treatment options.



Types of Adult Scoliosis



Signs and Symptoms



Diagnosis and Assessment



Treatment Options

This comprehensive eBook can help you make an informed decision about any next steps, whatever the situation.



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Scoliosis is often thought of as a condition that only affects teenagers. In fact, it can develop at any time.

Types of Adult Scoliosis

There are two main types of scoliosis which can affect adults.

Adolescent Scoliosis of the Adult (ASA): This is a pre-existing scoliosis which the person may or may not have been aware of. It was present when the person was younger, and is only diagnosed in adulthood.

ASA may be progressive or stable, depending on the individual case. For those with a previous diagnosis, monitoring progression is easier through comparison of current X-rays to adolescent X-rays.

Degenerative De-Novo Scoliosis (DDS): This is a scoliosis that begins in adulthood. It develops when the bones, joints or cartilage discs age, causing the onset of the degenerative scoliosis.

DDS usually develops in middle aged and older adults and typically starts around 45 years onwards. It is almost always progressive over time. This is the most common type of scoliosis in adults.

Less common types of adult scoliosis include neuromuscular scoliosis associated with conditions like cerebral palsy, scoliosis related to genetic disorders, and scoliosis caused by trauma.



Reviewing the Cobb angle of a scoliosis curve

How Prevalent is Adult Scoliosis?

Scoliosis is highly prevalent in adults. In adults over the age of 60 years, it is estimated that up to 68% of patients aged 60-90 years will have an adult scoliosis.²

It is believed that this will increase over the next 20 years as people live longer.

Fortunately, modern treatments such as custom bracing and scoliosis specific exercise rehabilitation offer options for patients with adult scoliosis.



Signs and Symptoms

Recognizing the signs of Adult Scoliosis is important for early detection and management of the condition.

Some common indicators are outlined below, and will vary between people.

Back Pain: Persistent or intermittent pain in the back, typically around the region of the curve. This pain may worsen with prolonged standing or sitting and may be accompanied by muscle spasms.

Visible Spinal Curvature: An observable sideways curve of the spine, which may be evident when standing or bending forward. This curvature can cause unevenness in the shoulders, hips, or waistline.

Changes in Posture: Alterations in posture, such as a forward lean or hunch. There can also be a significant loss of standing or sitting height.



A forward lean or hunch can be a sign of adult scoliosis

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Adult scoliosis can present with a variety of symptoms, which may vary depending on the severity of the curve.



Pain is usually the main complaint in adult scoliosis

Impact on Movement and Quality of Life: Discomfort, limited mobility, and changed posture can lead to difficulties with activities such as walking, sitting and performing routine tasks.

These symptoms can co-exist with other clinical factors such as history of surgery, family history of scoliosis, menopause or a diagnosis of osteopenia/osteoporosis, all of which can have a compounding effect on scoliosis progression.

Regular self-screening and awareness of these signs and symptoms, is essential to allow for timely intervention and management. Any changes or indications, should always be assessed.



Assessment and Diagnosis

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Early detection and accurate diagnosis, combined with treatment, leads to better outcomes and quality of life.

Adult Scoliosis is typically diagnosed through a combination of medical history review, physical assessment and X-ray.

An adult seeking assessment for scoliosis would typically begin by consulting with their doctor, health professional (e.g. Chiropractor/ Physical Therapist), or visit a dedicated scoliosis clinic, like ScoliCare.

The assessment begins with a complete history followed by a thorough physical and neurologic examination. The healthcare professional will also examine the spine, posture and look for any signs of scoliosis.

An X-ray is usually required to accurately diagnose a scoliosis after the physical assessment. Additional tests such as an MRI may also be referred for, as required.

What Happens After the Assessment?

Depending on the symptoms and examination findings, the healthcare professional may refer the patient on for further evaluation or treatment.

If the patient has visited a dedicated scoliosis clinic, the clinician will be able to discuss appropriate treatment options and a proposed management plan.

This should be tailored to the individual patient and their specific case.



Posterior (back) posture photo and X-ray show a significant left shift



Lateral (side) posture photo and X-ray show a significant forward lean



Treatment Options

Scoliosis care for adults is different to treatment approaches for children and adolescents.

Goals for adult scoliosis treatment are generally centred around better quality of life, and focus on pain management, balance, prevention of falls and postural improvement.

Early intervention with non-surgical treatments can play an important role in managing adult scoliosis. Some treatment options available to adults are outlined below.

Scoliosis Specific Exercise Rehabilitation:

In some cases, pain relief and stabilization can be achieved with scoliosis specific exercise rehabilitation such as ScoliBalance[®]. This can help improve spinal balance and standing balance, reduce fall risk, and may also aid in slowing the progression of a degenerative curve.

Custom Scoliosis Bracing:

Scoliosis bracing may also be considered as a treatment option, for adults with pain, instability and risk of curve progression.

Wearing a custom 3D designed scoliosis brace, such as a ScoliBrace[®], can support the spine, and may realign posture, reduce pain and improve quality of life for adults with scoliosis. Most adults only need to wear the brace part-time each day to get results.

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Adult scoliosis presents unique challenges and considerations, in terms of treatment goals.



Scoliosis Specific Exercise Rehabilitation

Surgery: Surgery may be recommended for those patients who do not respond to non-surgical treatment after a period of time, or when the spinal deformity is severe or getting worse and having a significant impact on their overall quality of life.

The choice of treatment depends on various factors, including the severity of the scoliosis, symptoms being experienced, the individual's overall health, and their preferences.

It's essential to discuss treatment options thoroughly with a healthcare provider to determine the most suitable approach for each individual case.



Have You Been Diagnosed with Adult Scoliosis?

Adult scoliosis is a complex condition. It is understandable that you may not know what to do at the outset.

The team at ScoliCare clinics are on hand to help you find the 'right treatment at the right time'. Our commitment to patient centered care underpins everything we do.

Our team of dedicated Scoliosis Clinicians and Rehabilitation Therapists have specific training in scoliosis and are committed to supporting patients on their journey to ensure the best possible outcome.

We understand that every journey is unique and that no patient or treatment is quite the same, so we promise to work alongside you and provide you with all of the answers, advice and individualized care that you or your loved one deserves.

If you have any questions about how we can help, please don't hesitate to contact us.



Phone:
(239) 513-9004



Website:
www.scolicare.com/naples-florida



Email:
naples.fl@scolicare.com



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Contact Us





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