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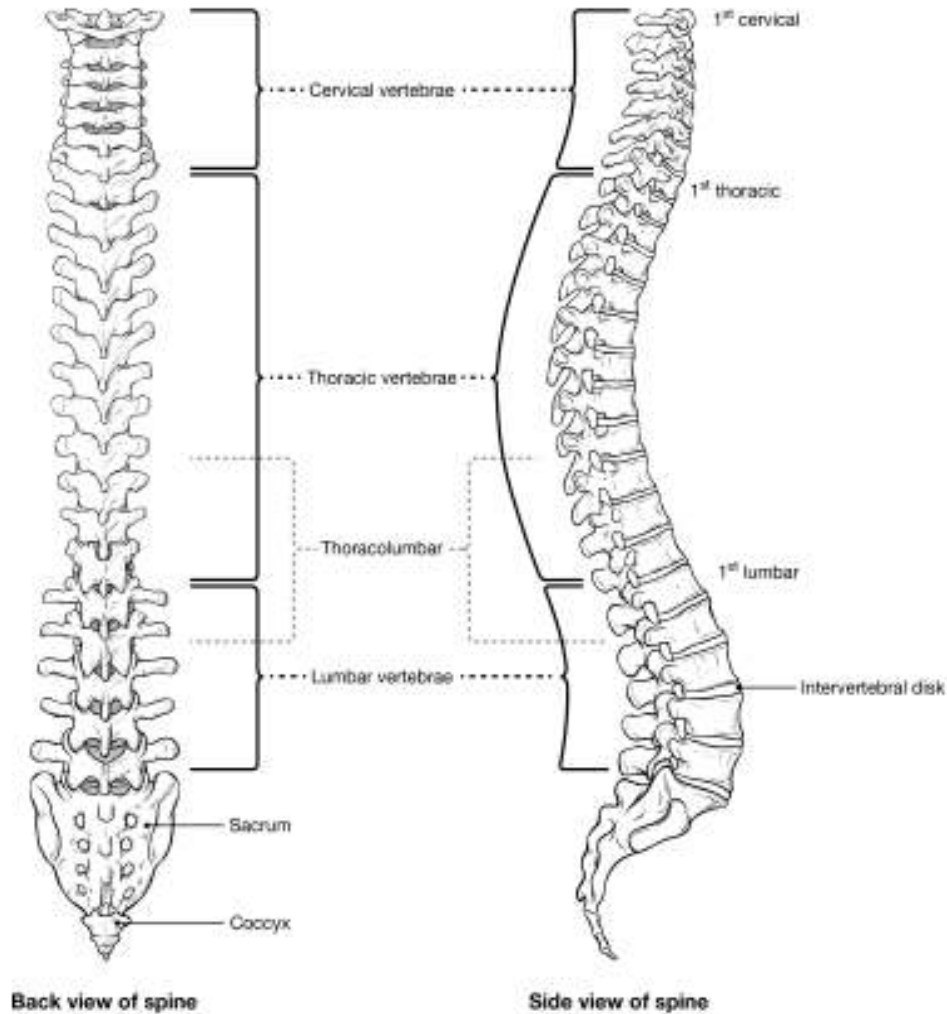
The Facts about Scoliosis*

Understanding Scoliosis

- Scoliosis is a progressive musculoskeletal disorder in which there is a sideways curvature of the spine, or backbone causing the spine to curve or twist into a “C” or “S” shape when viewed from the front of the patient.
- Adolescent idiopathic scoliosis (scoliosis of unknown cause) is the most common type and occurs after the age of 10. Girls are more likely than boys to have this type of scoliosis. Because scoliosis can run in families, a child who has a parent, brother, or sister with idiopathic scoliosis should be checked regularly for scoliosis by the family doctor.
- Patients with scoliosis usually exhibit no symptoms. It is frequently diagnosed when someone notices a mild skeletal asymmetry such as uneven shoulders, waistline discrepancies or a rib prominence.
- Despite some popular beliefs, scoliosis does not result from carrying heavy items, athletic involvement, sleeping/standing postures, or minor lower limb length inequality.

Types of Scoliosis

- 80-85 percent of scoliosis cases are diagnosed as idiopathic, meaning there is no underlying condition or cause for the spine deformity. (National Institutes of Health)
 - Adolescent Idiopathic Scoliosis (AIS) occurs after age 10 and is most common in females but can occur in males.
 - Juvenile Idiopathic Scoliosis (JIS) typically affects patients ranging from ages 3 to 10.
 - Early Onset Scoliosis (EOS) affects patients age 3 or younger, and although the condition is rare, it can severely interfere with lung function and growth.
- Scoliosis also can be defined by the location of the curve (cervical, thoracic or lumbar – see illustration below) or by the underlying condition (i.e. cerebral palsy, spina bifida or neurofibromatosis) causing the curve of the spine.



- Curves resulting from a vertebral abnormality (misshapen vertebrae) are called congenital, while myopathic curves are caused by a disease in the muscles and neuropathic curves are related to a neurological condition.
- Twenty-seven states (including Texas) have adopted a policy stating that districts or schools will screen students for scoliosis (Source: CDC's School Health Policies and Programs Study 2006).
- In the United States, 36 percent of elementary schools, 60.6 percent of middle/junior high schools and 40.2 percent of high schools screen students for scoliosis. (The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention School Health Policies and Programs Study (SHPPS) 2006)

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- Scoliosis should be screened most frequently between the ages of 9 and 14 when a child's growth is most rapid.
- With early screening and treatment, a mild case of scoliosis can be effectively treated to prevent progression of significant curves.

Scoliosis Treatment

- Of every 1,000 children in the United States, three to five develop spinal curves that are considered severe enough to need treatment. (NIH)
- The following steps are taken to evaluate a patient for scoliosis:
 - Review the patient's medical history
 - Physically examine the back, chest, pelvis, legs, feet and skin
 - Evaluate an X-ray of the spine
- Doctors evaluate curves by their location, shape, pattern and cause and use this information to determine the best treatment method. Treatment depends on the underlying condition, the size of the curve and how much growth potential remains for the patient.
- Observation, bracing and surgery are the three recommended treatment methods for scoliosis.
 - Close observation (re-examination every four to six months) is recommended for patients who are still growing and have an idiopathic curve of less than 25 degrees.
 - Bracing is recommended for patients in their growth spurt and who have a curve of less than 50 degrees.
 - Bracing prevents a curve from worsening but cannot correct the curve.
 - Surgery is an option for severe cases or if bracing is unable to prevent the diagnosed curve from progressing to a larger curve. Surgery techniques and implants can straighten the spine and stabilize the curve.
 - The average hospital stay for surgery to correct a scoliosis curve is five to six days.

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