

SCOLIOSIS SCREENING

State law (E.C. 49452.5) requires that all school districts in California provide scoliosis screening at the junior high school. School nurses conduct this screening and necessary re-screening during regular P.E. classes. The mandated grade levels are 7th grade females and 8th grade males.

Scoliosis is a side-to-side curvature of the spine. Each student is observed by a school nurse from the front, back and side. The uncovered spine is examined for any uneven shapes. If there are unusual findings, parents are notified in writing and the student is referred for medical evaluation and diagnosis.

Signs are a prominent shoulder blade, uneven hip or shoulder levels, unequal distance between arms and body and clothes that do not “hang” correctly.

The rationale for screening during early adolescence is that the body is still growing. The student’s muscles and skeleton respond to treatment with maximum recovery possible. Screening during early adolescence can prevent adult disability. Eighty percent of scoliosis tends to run in families and affects more girls than boys.

PROCEDURES FOR SCREENING

1. Schedule date on school master calendar.
2. Send parent scoliosis information letters home with all 7th grade girls and 8th grade boys.
3. Communicate with P.E. teachers; screenings need to be conducted with the students in their P.E. clothes.
4. Arrange screening worksheets according to period and P.E. teacher. Prepare worksheets for males and females.
5. Screening team nurses are prepared to arrange P.E. office or locker room for screenings.
6. P.E. aides usually escort students in and out of screening areas and distribute screening worksheets to the students. Talk with P.E. staff to arrange in advance.
7. Students who do not pass must be checked by another R.N. before referral is made.

WHEN TO REFER

Scoliometer reading greater than 5° with visual asymmetry confirmed by two R.N.s.

Recheck in six months to one year if scoliometer reading less than 5°.

(cont’d)

Any of the following conditions noted during the screening signal the need for evaluation by a physician:

1. Significantly elevated or prominent shoulder or scapula.
 - Greater than 1 inch (2.5 centimetre) difference in shoulder height
 - Greater than 1 inch (2.5 centimetre) difference in scapula height
2. Prominence of the thoracic ribs in the lumbar area. Using the scoliometer, measure the rotation of both the thoracic and lumbar areas. Refer if there is a five rotation or greater of either the thoracic OR lumbar. Also refer if the total rotation of both areas is 10.
3. Excessive thoracic kyphosis, particularly if it is angulated and not reversed by hyperextension.
4. Excessive lordosis (forward curvature of the spine), which cannot be reversed by forward flexion of the spine.
5. Asymetry of the waistline, with flattening of the waist on one side and accentuation on the other. This condition can be associated with lumbar scoliosis or unequal leg length.
6. Leg length difference greater than 1/2 inch (1.3 centimeters) when measurement is indicated by observation of uneven iliac crests. Student should be supine when measured from the anterior iliac crest to the medial ankle prominence on the same side.
7. Any persistent back pain, with or without deformity, which interferes with normal activity.

FOLLOW THROUGH

Students who were not referred for further evaluation because the findings were slight or borderline should be re-screened in approximately six months. Both parents and students should be kept fully informed.

Both parents and student will need support to allay their fears and to help them complete the evaluation process. After the evaluation has been completed, the school will follow through within the parameters of any physician's orders or results. Special services that *might* be offered include the following:

1. Adaptation of a physical education program.
2. Supervision of exercises recommended by the care provider.
3. Care of brace or cast.
4. Counseling of students or parents regarding a prescribed program for weight control, diet, exercise, medication and so on.

All pertinent information relative to scoliosis screening, evaluation results and the monitoring process is recorded on the student's school health form.

SECTION 7