

# HELPING YOU ALONG THE WAY: *Spinal Deformities & Spine Health*

There are many various ways a spinal deformity can affect someone. That is because a spinal deformity like scoliosis can take on many forms and have varying levels of severity. Each person will feel the pains of having a spinal deformity in different ways because we are all individuals and perceive things differently. Other factors contribute to the way a spinal deformity affects a person's life ranging from the location of the deformity to the degree of curvature, to name a few. So, there cannot be one way for each person to experience life with scoliosis. From the mind to the body, depending on how your symptoms develop, you may experience none or all the ways a deformity may affect your life. Sometimes, you cannot always find the care that helps you cope with how your manifestations develop. As stated before, everyone's situation is different, and there can often be overwhelming amounts of information on the web to sort through. Keep reading as this article has a wealth of resources to review to minimize that feeling of anxiety that information overload can often create.



**Article By:**  
**Courtney Battaglia**

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Before we move on to resources, let's investigate how some individuals may experience a spinal deformity. How we deal with a spinal deformity will vary greatly; however, some aspects will significantly influence a person more than others. Those that have shown greater importance are the actual degree of severity, the age of the individual, and the location of the deformity on the body. The spine is made of basically three sections. Think of these sections as the neck (cervical), the torso area (thoracic), and the lower back to your bottom (lumbar). Imagine a deformity developing in the thoracic region, which houses our lungs that keep us breathing. A person may find the simple task of breathing difficult as their lungs don't have as much room to move and open to take in air. The degree of severity is often measured by the Cobb angle method. This will help to direct the clinician towards an idea of a treatment plan for their patient. Regardless of the degree of severity diagnosed to an individual, it does not assign a perfect picture of symptoms, though the higher the degree, the greater the severity. The age of the patient is also an essential factor. This is because the person's age directs the road map for care and how someone may view or perceive what is happening within their bodies. A younger person may experience serious mental effects from having a spinal deformity rather than pain. Because their body is still growing, they could be helped by measures like a brace. A brace may not always be the most fashionable thing for a young person to wear, so their mental health may be affected more. While the older person may feel more of the physical symptoms of a spinal deformity because their body is not continuing to grow, and you start to see more of the pain from compression of nerves.

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People who experience a deformity will tell you that it can be difficult or even painful to wear specific shoes because their hips are not aligned correctly due to the degree of their curvature. There may be a sensation of tightness or stiffness in their lower back area. It may be difficult for the individual to move one side of their body, which creates a limitation on one side and overuse on the other. The psychological impact cannot be ignored either. Some people have expressed a significant amount of influence from how other people perceive how they look or having to deal with a large amount of pain from the deformity may cause a mental toll on the individual. So, depending on your need, there are many different resources to help you or your loved one cope with the varying degrees of impact a spinal deformity has on a person. Of course, checking with your physician before starting treatment is always essential. Here are some great tips or things to try to help alleviate some of the burdens a spinal deformity may place on a person.

## THINGS THAT CAN HELP

The usual treatment approach for someone with scoliosis is observation for the progression of the curvature, bracing if the patient's bones are still maturing, and surgery if the deformity is severe enough. However, these treatment plans can often be time-consuming, and the patient may need help between therapies or waiting for the funds to proceed with treatment. Again, always check first with your doctor before beginning anything different regarding your own or your loved ones' plan of care. It is also essential to ensure the group you are going to is skilled in helping people with spinal deformities. Here are some alternative approaches that may help in dealing with the effects of a deformity.

**\*It is recommended that you research and consult with a physician before attempting the alternative approaches and methods below:**

### YOGA



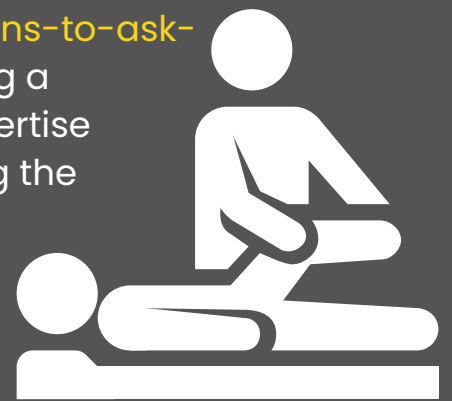
While it cannot cure your scoliosis, yoga can help to strengthen the core muscles of the spine and can help to lead to better flexibility and range of motion. If you type into google "Yoga for scoliosis practitioners near me," you will get many suggested people who specialize in yoga specifically for scoliosis. Here is an article from the Cleveland Clinic that gives some excellent background information on yoga for scoliosis and provides some good poses to try at home. Another great resource is this article that goes over yoga for scoliosis and also gives some good stretches to do. Elise Browning Miller goes over the benefits of yoga and gives you some poses to try with pictures to go along with the description. Again, always communicate with your physician before beginning any activity that has not been prescribed first by them.

# ..... CHIROPRACTOR

A person who specializes or has experience in scoliosis may help deal with the pain. This is because someone with a spinal deformity may suffer from the pain experienced when there is pressure on the spinal nerves.

Visit: <https://handsdownbetter.org/find-a-doctor/> to find a chiropractor near you. It will take you to The American Chiropractic Association (ACA) and assist you in finding a reputable practitioner. It is essential to ensure that you are seeing a practitioner with scoliosis experience.

Visit: <https://clear-institute.org/treating-scoliosis/questions-to-ask-your-doctor/> for an article that gives great tips on starting a conversation with a chiropractor to determine if their expertise aligns with your goals. It will help guide you in interviewing the chiropractor to make the most educated decision.



## PHYSICAL THERAPY .....

There is a wealth of information on the web that discusses the benefits of physical therapy in scoliosis-specific exercises.

Visit: <https://www.hudsonvalleyscoliosis.com/treatments/physical-therapy/> for an excellent article that talks about the specific variations of exercises and describe each one while giving the reader a good overview of the different types of approaches.

The John Hopkins Medicine website provides the reader with an overview of the Schroth Method for treating scoliosis:

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/scoliosis/schroth-method-for-scoliosis>. This method is known for helping patients cope with the burdens of having scoliosis, as evidenced by published studies.

[Healthline.com](https://www.healthline.com) gives the reader some good exercises to try at home to assist with mobility and flexibility

# HELPING THE MIND .....

There is undoubtedly an increased awareness that our mental health is vital to our well-being. The **National Scoliosis Foundation** has an online forum for people to either search through or even post and contribute to that covers a wide range of topics.



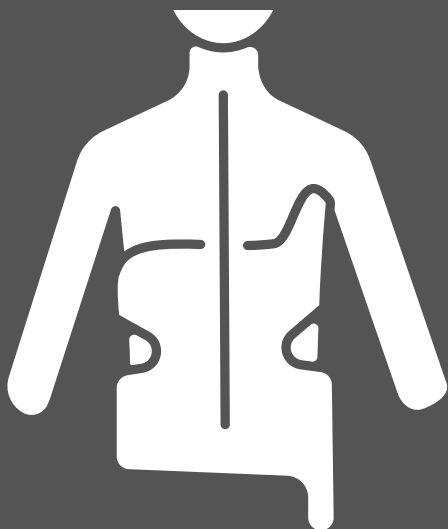
**Curvy Girls** is an international support group for girls and can be found here. You will see a news page, a resources page, and a link to search for a community that suits your needs best and connect with other people going through a spinal deformity like scoliosis.

Another great resource: <https://www.stuffthatworks.health/scoliosis/>. This is a community of individuals who are going through a spinal deformity, and they share their experiences with the different treatments that are out there. The members share what has worked for them and what has not worked. Having a child with a spinal deformity can feel very isolating for their young hearts.

**Higgy Bears** creates cute little stuffed animals who wear braces like the younger crowd may have included in their treatment plan and can, in a way, assist them to feel like they are not outsiders.

## .....FASHION & BACK BRACES

Having a spinal curve or having to wear a brace can cause a significant toll on emotions. Regardless of age or gender, it can be difficult. Having comfortable clothes can help increase a patient's willingness to adhere to the regimen of wearing a brace.



[www.bracebuddies.co](http://www.bracebuddies.co) makes tops that promote comfort for a brace.

**Hope's Closet** is another website that offers cute tops to encourage adherence of young girls who require a brace. Figuring out what to wear can be tricky, and there are not a lot of resources out there that are explicitly geared at men; however, here are great tips for dressing with your brace that can be applied to all genders: [www.bracingforscoliosis.org/what-to-wear-what-not-to-wear/](http://www.bracingforscoliosis.org/what-to-wear-what-not-to-wear/)

Sometimes a patient may be told their condition is a watch and wait situation; others may be having increased pain during treatment, they may be starting to feel the mental health effects of having this condition, or the parent may be having a hard time getting their child to adhere to the plan of care. Regardless of the degree of severity, age, or gender, the vast amount of information on the web today can increase the anxiety associated with a diagnosis of a spinal deformity. Hopefully, this article has given you an insight into what someone with a deformity can do to help cope with problems they may encounter that may come with the diagnosis.

**- COURTNEY BATTAGLIA, RN, WRITER  
& SPINEHOPE VOLUNTEER**

*Courtney Battaglia is a registered nurse with over thirteen years of experience in multiple areas of specialty to include, autoimmune disorders, infusion, cardiology, the surgical patient, and coding education. Courtney's goals are to incorporate her love of writing with her working knowledge as a nurse to further assist patients in their daily lives.*



**HELPING ONE SPINE AT A TIME**

