



Medtronic



Josephine™

explains bracing

'Hi, I'm Jo. Well, Josephine™ actually, but only my parents call me that.

I have scoliosis and I'm waiting for a brace. It's horrible finding out you have a problem with your back, but don't worry. It takes more than scoliosis to stop me from having a good time with my friends.'

Introduction

This booklet is intended as a resource for scoliosis patients and their parents. It explains everything you need to know about bracing.

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Why do I need to wear a brace?

If you have scoliosis with a spinal curve of 25 to 40 degrees and are still growing, your doctor may recommend that you wear a brace. The purpose of wearing the brace is to keep the curve in your spine from getting worse as you continue to grow. However, it's usually not intended to reduce the amount of curve you already have.

Whether bracing actually works is controversial. Some clinical studies support the use of bracing in young patients whose curves are at risk of progressing. According to several studies conducted by the Scoliosis Research Society (SRS), bracing successfully stops curve progression in 74% to 93% of female patients with **idiopathic scoliosis**, depending on the type of brace used and the duration of use.¹

Because bracing is designed to halt the progression of the curve, it's generally not recommended for treating scoliosis in young people who are skeletally mature or almost mature. Once skeletal growth has reached a certain point, or if the curve has become too severe (typically more than 40 to 50 degrees), bracing is generally not as effective. Bracing is also typically not recommended for treating adult scoliosis. Corrective surgery may be recommended in these instances.

Your doctor will determine if bracing is the appropriate treatment for your spinal curve. If so, he or she also will decide which type of brace is appropriate and how long you should wear the brace. You and your parents should discuss your treatment and bracing options thoroughly with your doctor.

What is a brace?

There are several different kinds of braces commonly prescribed for children and adolescents with scoliosis. A brace is often made out of plastic and is contoured specifically to your body, with strategically placed padding and straps that place resistance on your particular spinal curve(s).

My doctors says I need a brace. Now what?

First, you'll have a brace fitting with an orthotic specialist, the person or team who will design and make your brace based on your doctor's prescription. Different parts of your body will be measured so the brace will fit you perfectly.

Once your brace is ready, your orthotist will show you how to put it on and give you specific instructions for wearing it. You'll start wearing your brace for a few hours a day, eventually building up to the full amount of time your doctor prescribes, which may be up to 23 hours per day. At first, you may need help putting your brace on, but most patients soon learn how to do this by themselves.

Follow-up visits with your doctor, which may include spinal x-rays, will determine whether your brace is keeping your spine positioned correctly. Your brace also will be checked periodically to make sure it's still fitting properly as you continue to grow. Be sure to ask your doctor whom to contact if you have any concerns or difficulties with your brace between check-ups.

What can I do while I'm wearing my brace?

Staying active is important and healthy! You should be able to continue to do anything you normally like to do, such as sports, playing an instrument, or hanging out with your friends. You may remove your brace while participating in a sports activity. Any activity you can do while wearing your brace should be okay, but if in doubt, check with your doctor first.

What kind of clothes can I wear?

You'll wear your brace under your clothes, so anything that fits over your brace should be fine. Most people find loose-fitting clothes to be more comfortable over the brace, so you may want to consider wearing clothes a size or two larger than usual.

You should always wear a well-fitted, wrinkle-free, seamless 100% cotton t-shirt under your brace. This will help keep the brace from rubbing your skin. Seams can be particularly irritating, so if you can't find seamless shirts in your local shops, contact your orthotic specialist.



How can I maximize the benefits of my brace?

To give your brace the greatest chance of successfully stopping the progression of your spinal curve, it's important that you:

- Wear your brace each day for the full amount of time your doctor prescribes.
- Take good care of your skin daily.
- Wear a well-fitting, wrinkle-free shirt under your brace at all times.
- Put on the brace exactly as instructed by your doctor.
- Perform any daily exercises recommended by your doctor.

'Don't be scared if you need a brace.'



Any questions?

Am I the only one with scoliosis?

Not at all. It's quite common - two or three people in every hundred have it.

Does scoliosis run in families?

We think so. At a younger age, it's most common in boys, while girls are more likely to get it when older. It also seems to run in some families. We don't know exactly why yet, though.

Will I get back pain?

You shouldn't. People with scoliosis don't seem to have back pain more or less often than anyone else.

Are there any other treatments for scoliosis?

You may find lots of different options - especially if you look on the Internet. This includes things like diets, physical therapy or chiropractic treatment. There is no evidence, though, these work. If you have any questions about any other treatments, talk to your doctor.

Will scoliosis hold me back when I grow up?

It shouldn't. You should be able to do most jobs, travel and play sports.

"When I found out I had scoliosis, I had loads of questions. Whatever you want to know, just ask your doctor."



Help and advice

If you're worried about anything or you want to find out more about Scoliosis, just talk to your doctor or check out some of these links.

More about scoliosis

The Scoliosis Research Society

www.srs.org/patient_and_family/patient_stories

The Pediatric Orthopaedic Society of North America (POSNA)

www.posna.org

MDT Website:

<https://www.medtronic.com/en-gb/patients/conditions-treatments/spinal-cranial-orthopedic/about-scoliosis.html>

Curvy Girls

<https://www.curvygirlsscoliosis.com/>

Acknowledgements

1. Nachemson AL, Peterson LE. Effectiveness of treatment with a brace in girls who have adolescent idiopathic scoliosis. A prospective, controlled study based on data from the Brace Study of the Scoliosis Research Society. *J Bone Joint Surg Am.* June 1995;77(6):815-822.



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