

Spina Bifida

Spina bifida is a type of birth defect. Most of the time, children who have the condition don't have any problems from the condition. It happens when the bones of the spine don't properly form around the spinal cord in the baby. It can end up affecting how the skin on the baby's back looks. In severe cases, it causes problems walking or doing regular daily activities without additional help.

The mild form of the disease tends to be more common. You won't see the defect, so many people never know that they have the problem until they have a back x-ray taken for a different reason. This form doesn't cause problems or require treatment.

Severe forms of the disease are a lot rarer. In cases of meningocele, fluid leaks from the spine and pushes outward against the skin causing skin bulging over the spine. Myelomeningocele is the most rare and severe form of the condition. A portion of the spinal cord and spinal nerves pushes outward from the spinal canal, which causes bulging and a large pouch.

Spina Bifida Anatomy

The spine is composed of a number of small bones, referred to as vertebrae, which are all stacked one on top of the other. Ligaments, nerves, muscles and intervertebral discs are all additional components of the spine.

Vertebrae connects to create a canal that shields and protects the spinal cord. It is composed of three distinct sections creating natural curves in your back: chest area (thoracic), curves of the neck area (cervical) and lower back (lumbar). The lower part of the spine is composed of vertebrae fused together. Five lumbar vertebrae join the pelvis and the spine together.

Spinal nerves travel along the spinal canal to carry messages between the muscles and the brain. The nerves will branch out from the spinal cord out of the vertebrae openings.

How to Treat Spina Bifida:

Treatment tends to depend on the severity of the defect. Most of the time, the child will only have a mild defect and might not require any treatment. For those who have a more severe defect, surgery might be the only option. If there is nerve damage, the child might need a wheelchair, brace or other aids.

Tips:

- Talk to your health care provider about early forms of treatment. Most of those children with the condition will work with physical and occupational therapists soon after birth. The therapist will teach the parents how to perform activities and exercises with the little one.
- If your little one doesn't have feeling in their limbs and doesn't have a sense of pain, they can end up injured and not know anything about it. You will want to check your little one's skin regularly for any bruises, cuts and sores.
- Make sure to attend all of your doctor visits.
- Help your little one to remain active and eat healthy foods.