Patient Education

Kyphosis

What Is It?

The word "kyphosis" is used to describe an abnormally rounded back. Some degree of rounded curvature of the spine is normal.

Why Does It Happen?

The cause of kyphosis is unknown.

Who Has It?

Kyphosis is most often noted during adolescence.

How Is It Found?

Kyphosis may be noticed during a scoliosis screening at a school, during a physical exam or by the parent and/or the child because of the way the back looks.

What Are The Types?

Postural kyphosis is the most common type. It is an exaggerated but fl exible increase in the normal curve of the spine. Typically it does not lead to problems later in adult life.

Scheuermann's kyphosis is a sharply increased curve that is not caused by posture. It is very rigid. On X-ray some of the vertebrae are wedge-shaped in appearance. This wedging causes the spine to collapse forward.

How Is It Treated?

Postural kyphosis does not require any treatment. Reminders on proper posture may or may not be helpful. If discomfort is involved, exercises to strengthen the abdomen and stretch the hamstrings may provide relief.
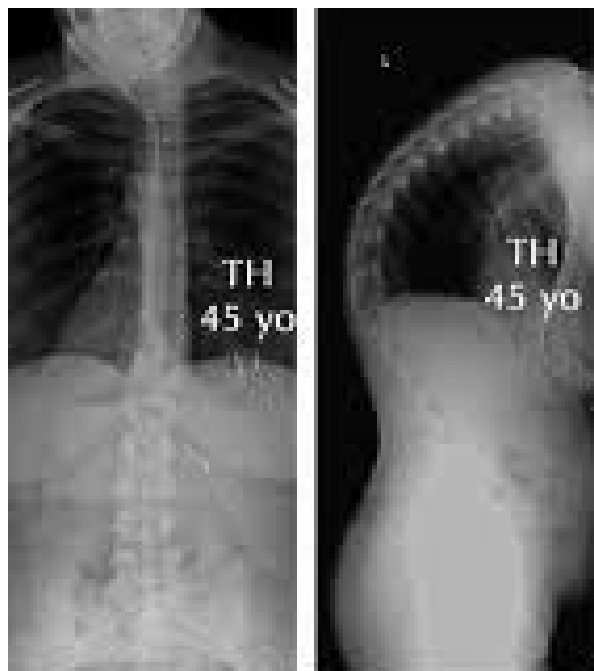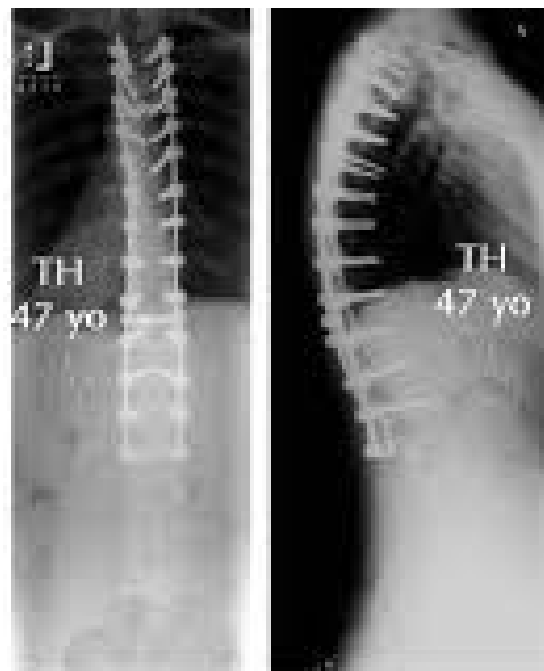
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Treatment for Scheuermann's kyphosis is based on the severity of the curve. Mild Scheuermann's kyphosis may not need any treatment. For more severe curves, treatment may include a brace or surgery. A brace is used if the child is still growing to keep the curve from getting worse.

Surgery is recommended for large curves. Surgery will decrease the degree of the curve, stabilize and balance the spine. This is done by straightening and fusing the abnormal vertebrae together.

Before

After