



Dear School Nurse,

As founder of Curvy Girls Scoliosis Support Group, I wanted to share with you my experience in having Scoliosis, and how you can help other students affected deal with its everyday challenges.

When I was diagnosed and endured years of bracing and ultimately major spine surgery, it was my School Nurse and Physical Education teacher who made a tremendous difference in my school adjustment. My School Nurse's office was a safe place to remove my brace and store it during gym class. She reassured me that I could ask her for assistance at any time; I felt that she was very sensitive toward my condition.

It's very important to realize that, aside from being a medical condition, Scoliosis affects us most emotionally. Kids in middle school try very hard to feel like they fit in. Wearing this uncomfortable contraption to school every day poses some very embarrassing situations that can become more traumatic than most people realize. Oftentimes, kids with Scoliosis try very hard to keep their disease a secret from peers, which can result in emotional stress. Kids with scoliosis frequently face challenges such as:

- Acute self-consciousness around body image and braces
- Avoidance of situations (i.e., gym class, swimming pools, school dances, and proms) where the secret of the brace or body deformity might be exposed
- Fears of facing major spinal surgery

Students with Scoliosis need to feel that they have an ally in the school. You can help the student with their adjustment in many ways such as:

- 1) Ensure that they have a person to seek out, and a private space where they can remove, hide, or store their brace, so that they can avoid questions from their peers;
- 2) Communicate the student's needs and concerns to other school personnel, such as late passes, additional set of textbooks (to reduce carrying a heavy load);
- 3) Make sure that Scoliosis is discussed in health classes; and
- 4) Connect the student with counseling services if they show signs of anxiety, depression or withdrawing from peers.

It's very important that the school be sensitive to children who are being braced for Scoliosis and possibly facing surgery. Your acceptance and attitude towards your student can make a world of difference. I know, because they made a difference for me!

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Leah Stoltz'.

Leah Stoltz, Founder

National Scoliosis Foundation created a 10-minute scoliosis screening video, "Catch the Curve" www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-9A0OuEr14. NSF and a Curvy Girl in your area are available to attend a scoliosis pre-screening session to discuss the video and tell their story.