

DAILY NEWS



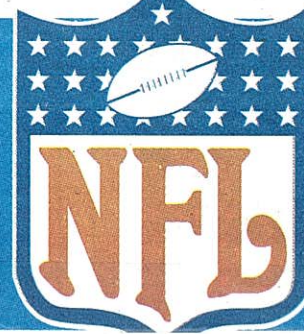
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DAILY NEWS

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New scoliosis therapies spare the rod

Scoliosis, an abnormal curvature of the spine, can pose a serious problem for a child — and in some instances can be fatal.

But there are developments in its treatment that come as welcome news to parents.

For 40 years, the standard procedure for correcting a curve was to place two hooks in the back of the vertebrae with one rod connecting them. The problem? "Sometimes these rods would break," says Dr. Vishal Sarwahi, director of Spine Deformity

Surgery at Montefiore Medical Center & the Albert Einstein College of Medicine.

"Now we are placing screws in the spine from the back to the front in order to allow a stronger fixation. The success rate is nearly 100% as opposed to 50%-60% from the previous procedure," he adds.

For parents fretting about the possibility of paralysis, Sarwahi says the chance is less than 1% because he works far from the nerves when performing this surgery. "People are so scared of spine surgery, but this procedure

is actually safer than driving a car day to day."

Good news also abounds for kids who require a brace — an alternative to the overbearing contraption that stretches from the neck to the hips has arrived.

Dr. Brian Ouellette, of Scoliosis Specialists in Manhattan (www.scoliosisspecialists.com), has been working with scoliosis patients for 14 years and says the relatively new SpineCor Brace is the only one they use.

"It's the only flexible brace that promotes activity and is

hardly noticeable under clothing, whereas traditional rigid braces are often embarrassing and painful. Surgeons who have been researching this brace say only 6% [of patients] will eventually need surgery, and so far, I haven't had anyone get worse."

Ouellette says patients might have to wear the new brace for as few as 1 year or as many as 10. And much like the rigid brace, the SpineCor is worn 20 hours a day, with two hours in the morning and two in the evening brace-free.

Lisa Chase