

# SPINA BIFIDA



A birth defect in which a developing baby's spinal cord fails to develop properly. It occurs when a developing baby's spinal cord fails to develop or close properly while in the womb.

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## 1 IT IS RARE

There are fewer than 200,000 cases in the United States per year.

## 2 THERE ARE THREE TYPES

The three types are: Myelomeningocele, Meningocele, and Spina Bifida Occulta.

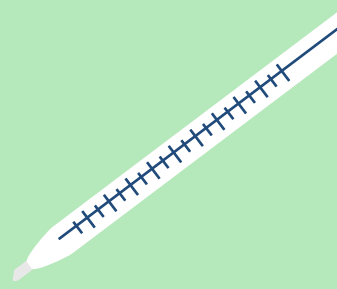
## 3 MYELOMENINGOCELE

Myelomeningocele is the most serious type of spina bifida. With this condition, a sac of fluid comes through an opening in the baby's back. Part of the spinal cord and nerves are in this sac and are damaged. This type of spina bifida causes moderate to severe disabilities, such as problems affecting how the person goes to the bathroom, loss of feeling in the person's legs or feet, and not being able to move the legs.



## 4 MENINGOCELE

With meningocele a sac of fluid comes through an opening in the baby's back. But, the spinal cord is not in this sac. There is usually little or no nerve damage. This type of spina bifida can cause minor disabilities.



## 5 SPINA BIFIDA OCCULTA

Spina bifida occulta is the mildest type of spina bifida. It is sometimes called "hidden" spina bifida. With it, there is a small gap in the spine, but no opening or sac on the back. The spinal cord and the nerves usually are normal. Many times, spina bifida occulta is not discovered until late childhood or adulthood. This type of spina bifida usually does not cause any disabilities.



## 6 DIAGNOSIS

Spina bifida can be diagnosed during pregnancy or after the baby is born. Spina bifida occulta might not be diagnosed until late childhood or adulthood, or might never be diagnosed.

## 7 TREATMENTS

Not all people born with spina bifida have the same needs, so treatment will be different for each person. Some people have problems that are more serious than others. People with myelomeningocele and meningocele will need more treatments than people with spina bifida occulta.



## 8 TETHERED SPINAL CORDS

Many people with open spina bifida have tethered spinal cords. Normally, the bottom of the spinal cord floats around freely in the spinal canal. A tethered spinal cord is attached to the spinal canal. When this happens, the spinal cord stretches as a person grows, which can permanently damage the spinal nerves. The person might have back pain, scoliosis (crooked spine), leg and foot weakness, changes in bladder or bowel control, and other problems. A tethered spinal cord can be treated with surgery.

