

Growing Rods

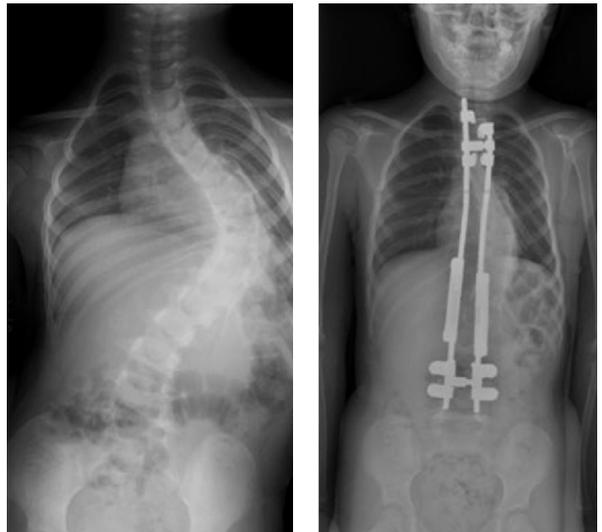
Specialist Care Centre
Patient Information

What are growing rods?

Growing rods are metal rods attached to the spine in an operation, that allow for continued growth of the spine. They are effectively an internal brace system to stabilise the spine, providing partial correction and stopping the curve from progressing. The rods are put in from the back of the spine and attached to the spine above and below the curve. The curve is partially corrected during the first operation.

Who needs growing rods?

Children who develop scoliosis early in life are still growing. Most surgery to correct scoliosis involves fusion of the spine, therefore stopping its growth, so this cannot be done on young children as their spines are still developing. If the spine is fused and the child is still growing, the 'crank-shaft phenomenon' could occur. This is when the front of the spine continues to grow, resulting in further rotation and curvature of the spine. Growth rods are considered for children between the ages of 4 and 11 years.



X-rays showing the spine before and after the growing rods were attached.

How often do the rods need lengthening?

The child returns every six months to a year to have the rods lengthened to keep up with the natural growth of the spine, whilst directing the growth into a more 'normal' line. This is a smaller operation, under general anaesthetic, and the child is usually in hospital just one or two nights.

Are there any problems associated with the rods?

Having growing rods does mean repeated surgical procedures and hospital admissions. There is also the risk that rods can break, although with development of instrumentation this is becoming less common. Most children will have to wear a brace to protect the instrumentation.

Will the growth rods always be there?

When the child becomes older and reached their growth potential, the growth rods will be removed and the surgeon will perform a spinal fusion operation.

Contact details

- **Ward 22:** 01642 854522 (24 hours)
- **PCCU:** 01642 854667 (24 hours)
- **Mr Zak Choudhury's secretary:** 01642 835564
- **Mr Waleed Hekal's secretary:** 01642 835811
- **Cheryl Honeyman, Nurse Specialist**
Office number: 01642 850850 extension 56267
Mobile number: 0793 536 1881
Email: cheryl.honeyman@nhs.net

Patient Experience

South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust would like your feedback. If you wish to share your experience about your care and treatment or on behalf of a patient, please contact The Patient Experience Department who will advise you on how best to do this.

This service is based at The James Cook University Hospital but also covers the Friarage Hospital In Northallerton, our community hospitals and community health services.

To ensure we meet your communication needs please inform the Patient Experience Department of any special requirements, i.e. Braille/ Large Print.

T: 01642 835964

E: stees.patient.experience@nhs.net

The James Cook University Hospital
Marton Road, Middlesbrough, TS4 3BW. Switchboard: 01642 850850

Author: Specialist Nurse, Paediatric Spine
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