

## Fast Facts

### Spina Bifida

- A type of birth defect called a neural tube defect
- The neural tube is the part of the structure that becomes the baby's brain, spinal cord and tissues that enclose them. Usually it forms early in the pregnancy and closes by the 28<sup>th</sup> day after conception
- For babies with spina bifida, part of the neural tube doesn't close or develop correctly causing defects in the spinal cord and the vertebra (bones of the spine)
- Disability can range from mild to severe depending on the type of defect, size, location and complications
- Cause isn't known, but thought to be related to a combination of factors, such as genetics, nutrition and environment
- Two biggest risk factors are a family history of neural tube defects and a folate deficiency in the mother prior to and during pregnancy.
- More common among whites and Hispanics
- Females are more likely to be affected than males
- Several types: spina bifida occulta, myelomeningocele and meningocele (this type is extremely rare)
- Spina bifida occulta is the most common and mildest type
- Myelomeningocele is the most severe type

| <i>Symptoms</i>   | <i>Treatment</i>   | <i>Prevention</i>  |
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| <p><i>Spina bifida occulta:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-No symptoms</li> <li>-Sometimes, abnormal tuft of hair, a small dimple or a birthmark in the area of the skin above the defect</li> </ul>   | <p><i>Correct the Opening:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Surgery before birth</li> <li>-Surgery after birth</li> </ul> <p><i>Delivery by cesarean to prevent complications</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Take in enough folic acid before and during pregnancy</li> <li>-Talk to your doctor before becoming pregnant if you had spina bifida, have already given birth to a child with spina bifida, are taking anti-seizure medications, have diabetes or are obese</li> </ul> |
| <p><i>Myelomeningocele:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Distinct opening in the infant's back</li> <li>-Sometimes, a sac is present where the tissues and nerves have pushed through the opening</li> <li>-Skin may or may not cover the sac</li> </ul> | <p><i>Correcting any complications:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Surgery</li> <li>-Physical therapy</li> </ul>  |  |

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