

Shriners Children's St. Louis Utilizing New Scoliosis Treatment to Help Patients Recover Faster

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ST. LOUIS, MO, UNITED STATES, June 23, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Scoliosis is a relatively common orthopedic condition that affects anywhere from 6 to 9 million kids across the United States. In the last three years, Shriners Children's St. Louis has seen 203 patients who needed surgical correction for scoliosis. As leaders in scoliosis treatments, the nonprofit healthcare system is now offering an innovative new treatment to help kids avoid intensive spinal fusion surgery and get back to living their lives sooner.

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Dr. Scott Luhmann, Shriners Children's

Dr. Scott Luhmann and Dr. Brian Kelly with Shriners Children's St. Louis are two of only 70 orthopedic surgeons in the US that have been trained to use ApiFix Technology.

The device, which received FDA approval six years ago, is an alternative to both spinal fusion and Vertebral Body Tethering (VBT) and allows patients to recover and get back to their normal activities in as little as three months.

“There are a lot of factors that we as providers, as well as the parents and patients, consider when we're evaluating best treatment options for severe scoliosis,” Dr. Luhmann said. “While traditional spinal fusion surgery and VBT are both options that we utilize in some cases, I wanted to bring ApiFix to Shriners Children's St. Louis so we could provide an alternative treatment option that offers good long-term outcomes while being less invasive. The goal is to keep a greater range of back motion and function into adulthood, with minimum additional scoliosis surgeries. While spinal fusion patients are in the hospital for three days and have a longer recovery period due to the intensive nature of the surgery, ApiFix patients are only in the hospital one night and take much less pain medication. Patients are typically back to school in a week, so it's a vastly different recovery.”

Dr. Luhmann started performing ApiFix surgeries three years ago and has already completed 20 operations. The device works by being anchored onto the spine and uses a self-adjusting rod that expands as the patient grows. Two to three years after spinal growth completion, the ApiFix device is removed through a minimally invasive outpatient surgery. Dr. Luhmann said the treatment can only be used on adolescents with idiopathic scoliosis, meaning there are not any other diseases associated with the child's curvature of the spine and is ideal for young teens with a moderate-sized spinal curve up to 60 degrees, with a flexible deformity and have growth remaining. He said it's been gratifying to already see the difference this treatment option is making in patients' lives.

"One young female patient who received the surgery is an active high school athlete who runs track and plays basketball," Dr. Luhmann said. "Other surgeries would've kept her out for an entire season, and she really wouldn't have gained her durability back for a year. We performed ApiFix and she was back to running and playing in three months. For kids who play competitive sports or aspire to play at a higher level, missing an entire season could have major impacts on their life goals. Those are things we try to always consider at Shriners Children's. It's about more than just the immediate surgical fix. We want to help our patients achieve whatever they set out to do in life."

Scoliosis is most commonly diagnosed between 10-15 years of age during periods of rapid growth. Pediatric medical experts recommend females be screened at least twice at ages 10 and 12 and males at ages 13 or 14. For information on Shriners Children's St. Louis, go to www.shrinerschildrens.org/en/locations/st-louis.

About Shriners Children's

Shriners Children's improves the lives of children by providing pediatric specialty care, conducting innovative research, and offering outstanding education programs for medical professionals. Children with orthopedic conditions, burns, spinal cord injuries, and cleft lip and palate are eligible for care, regardless of the families' ability to pay, and receive all care and services in a compassionate, family-centered environment. For more information, please visit shrinerschildrens.org.

Jessica Williams
BAM Marketing Agency



Dr. Luhmann with Shriners Children's patient, Londyn.

+1 618-772-2349

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