Klippel Feil Syndrome

Klippel-Feil Syndrome is present since birth (*congenital*). It is a rare disorder characterized by the coming together (*fusion*) of any 2 of the 7 neck (*cervical*) vertebrae.

CAUSES

It is caused by a failure of the cervical vertebrae to divide during the early weeks of fetal development.

SYMPTOMS

The most common signs of the disorder are:

- Short neck.
- Low hairline at the back of the head.
- Restricted mobility of the upper spine.

Other symptoms may include:

- *Scoliosis* (curvature of the spine).
- *Spina bifida* (a birth defect of the spine).
- Anomalies of the kidneys and the ribs.
- cleft palate.
- Breathing problems.
- Heart malformations.

The disorder also may be associated with abnormalities of the:

- Head and face.
- Skeleton.
- Sex organs.
- Muscles.
- Brain and spinal cord.
- Arms, legs, and fingers.

TREATMENT

Treatment for Klippel-Feil Syndrome is symptomatic and may include surgery to relieve cervical or craniocervical instability and constriction of the spinal cord, and to correct scoliosis. Physical therapy may also be useful.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN

The prognosis for most individuals with Klippel-Feil Syndrome is good if the disorder is treated early and appropriately. Activities that can injure the neck should be avoided.

RESEARCH BEING DONE

Research supported by the NINDS includes studies to understand how the brain and nervous system normally develop and function and how they are affected by disease and damage caused by an accident (*trauma*). These studies contribute to a greater understanding of birth defects such as Klippel-Feil Syndrome and open promising new avenues for treatment.

Research is continually being done to learn more about this problem.

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