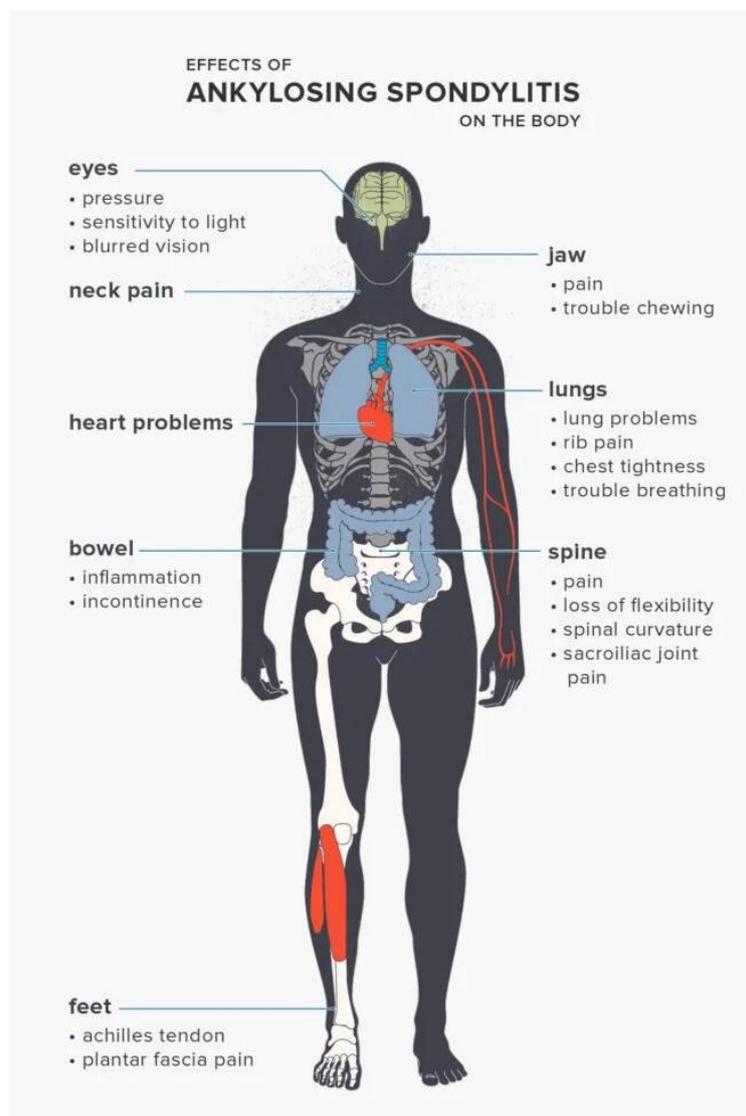


## Ankylosing Spondylitis (AS)



### What is ankylosing spondylitis?

Ankylosing spondylitis (AS) is a long-term inflammatory condition that mainly affects the spine and the joints linking the spine to the pelvis (sacroiliac joints). It can cause back pain, stiffness, and reduced movement over time. AS is a type of inflammatory arthritis.

### Who can be affected?

AS often starts in young adults, usually before the age of 45. It affects both men and women. Symptoms may develop gradually over months or years.

### **Common symptoms**

Symptoms vary between individuals and may include:

- Persistent lower back or buttock pain lasting more than 3 months
- Back stiffness, especially in the morning or after rest
- Pain that improves with movement or exercise
- Reduced flexibility of the spine
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Pain in other joints such as hips, shoulders, or ribs

Some people may also experience eye inflammation (uveitis), bowel symptoms, or skin conditions.

### **What causes ankylosing spondylitis?**

The exact cause is unknown. AS is linked to inflammation of the joints and ligaments around the spine. A gene called **HLA-B27** is commonly associated with AS, but not everyone with this gene develops the condition.

### **How is ankylosing spondylitis diagnosed?**

Diagnosis is based on:

- Your symptoms and medical history
- Physical examination
- Blood tests to look for inflammation
- Imaging such as X-rays or MRI scans of the spine or pelvis

Early diagnosis is important to help manage symptoms and maintain mobility.

### **How is ankylosing spondylitis treated?**

There is no cure, but treatment can effectively control symptoms and slow progression.

### **Exercise and physiotherapy**

- Regular exercise is one of the most important treatments
- Stretching and posture exercises help maintain spinal movement
- Physiotherapy can provide tailored exercise programmes

### **Medication**

- Anti-inflammatory medicines (NSAIDs) to reduce pain and stiffness
- Disease-modifying medications or biologic treatments may be prescribed by a specialist

### **Lifestyle advice**

- Stay physically active
- Maintain good posture
- Avoid smoking (smoking can worsen symptoms)
- Maintain a healthy weight

### **Managing flare-ups**

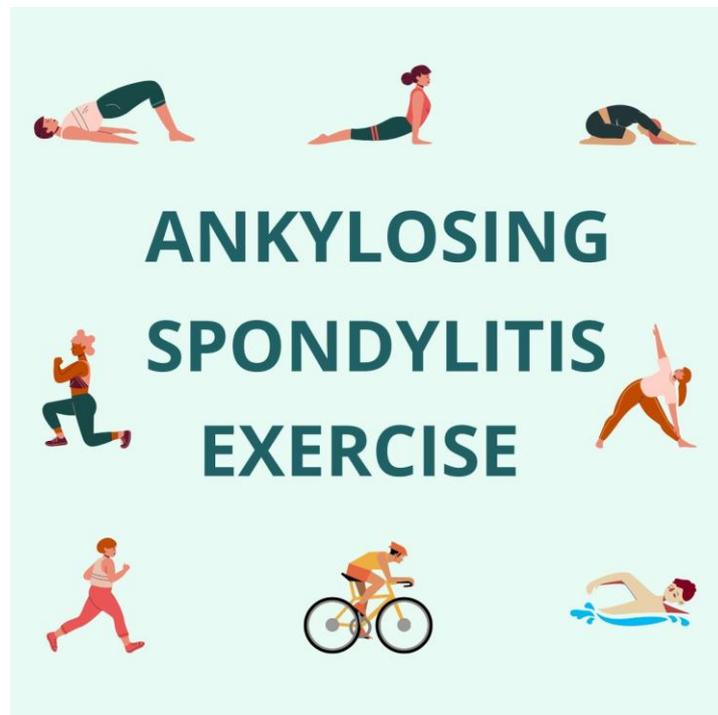
- Keep moving within comfort
- Use heat to ease stiffness
- Pace activities and rest when needed

### **When should I seek medical advice?**

Contact your GP or healthcare professional if:

- Back pain and stiffness persist or worsen
- You develop new joint pain or swelling
- You have eye pain, redness, or sensitivity to light

- Symptoms significantly affect daily activities or sleep



### **Outlook**

With early diagnosis, regular exercise, and appropriate treatment, many people with ankylosing spondylitis lead active and fulfilling lives.

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