

YOUR GUIDE TO LIVING WITH ANKYLOSING SPONDYLITIS



Spondylitis
Association
of America™

Your Guide to Living with Ankylosing Spondylitis (4th Edition)

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1. Self-help, medical

This book is not intended as a substitute for the medical advice of physicians. The activities, exercise programs and medication information contained in this book are for informational purposes only. It is strongly recommended that readers consult with their own physicians and/or physical therapists prior to beginning any activities or exercises, to be assured that each activity or exercise is appropriate to their own individual needs and limitations. Participating without professional advice may lead to injuries or complications of pre-existing conditions.

The Spondylitis Association of America was the first and remains the largest resource in the U.S. for people affected by ankylosing spondylitis (AS) and related diseases (spondyloarthritis). For more than 20 years the SAA has dedicated all of its resources to funding program services and research that directly benefit those with spondyloarthritis.



Now, nearly 4 decades since AS was first recognized as a condition separate from other types of arthritis, new treatments and expanding scientific knowledge hold promise for the future. In spite of these advances, there are still many challenges. These include earlier diagnosis, access to medications and the ongoing quest to uncover the cause and the cure. With your continued support, and that of dedicated researchers, we are committed to meeting those challenges.

While there is yet no cure for AS, there is much that you can do to feel better. Studies have shown that when armed with information and proper disease management tools, people with AS can remain productive, both professionally and personally, in spite of having AS.

We wish you every success in developing your individual program for optimum health, and we do hope that this booklet will help function as a beginning guide.

– Spondylitis Association of America

MISSION STATEMENT

To be a leader in the quest to cure ankylosing spondylitis and related diseases, and to empower those affected to live life to the fullest.

INTRODUCTION

The Spondylitis Association of America (SAA) has produced this book to provide you with practical information about ankylosing spondylitis (AS) and to urge you to take charge.

If you have been newly diagnosed with AS, you may have questions and fears about the future. We do know what you're going through, because we have been there. But we also know that taking an active role in managing your condition, backed by a sound knowledge base, will positively influence its outcome.

We have designed this book to facilitate your role in taking charge of your AS. Our goal is to provide you with an overview of AS – how it may affect your health and daily activities; hereditary factors; various treatment modalities; and the importance of exercise and good posture habits.



**A collection
of exercise
videos are
available to
help guide
you through
a daily routine.**

Additional information is available from SAA, including exercise videos and a more comprehensive educational publication called “*Straight Talk on Spondylitis.*” In addition to this booklet, your membership contribution entitles you to receive invitations to regional family educational programs and our quarterly publication, “*Spondylitis Plus,*” your direct pipeline to current information and scientific breakthroughs in AS, as well as access to the members’ only section of the SAA web site.

If you have one of the diseases associated with AS, including reactive arthritis, psoriatic spondylitis, inflammatory bowel disease of spondylitis or undifferentiated spondylitis, SAA has published a special booklet for you entitled a Family of Related Diseases. This booklet provides information specific to the related conditions not covered in this publication. Please contact SAA at (800) 777-8189 for a free copy.

UNDERSTANDING AS

ANKYLOSING SPONDYLITIS (AS) IS A RHEUMATIC CONDITION, included in a group of inflammatory diseases that affect the musculoskeletal system. The name is derived from the Greek words “ankylos” meaning “bent,” and “spondylos,” meaning “spine.” Although AS primarily affects the spine, it also commonly affects joints of the shoulders, hips, knees and feet. And because AS is a systemic (whole body) condition, other organs, such as the eyes, and more rarely the heart and lungs, can also be involved.



AS is the primary disease among the related conditions called “seronegative spondylarthropathies.” “Sero” refers to the blood and “negative” indicates that people with AS usually do not have the antibody known as rheumatoid factor present in their blood. This distinguishes AS from rheumatoid arthritis, in which high levels of rheumatoid factor are usually found. Spondyloarthritis refers to arthritis (arthropathy) which occurs in the spine (spondylo).

AS is a serious but, most of the time, a manageable disease for which the course varies among individuals. However, in all cases, a proactive role in its management will positively affect its outcome. With proper medication to minimize stiffness and pain, and daily exercises to maintain optimum mobility, strength and good posture, most people with AS can live productive lives and remain fully employed.