

INFORMATION

information



VICTORIA

inc. OSTEOPOROSIS VICTORIA

ANKYLOSING SPONDYLITIS (AS)

What is it?

Ankylosing (meaning stiff or rigid) Spondylitis (meaning inflammation in the spine) is a relatively uncommon disease that affects the spine, often causing severe backache and stiffness. AS may also affect the hips, shoulders and the joint which attaches the spine to the pelvis – the sacroiliac joint.

Why does it occur?

The cause of Ankylosing Spondylitis (AS) is unknown but there appears to be a strong genetic link. Most people with AS carry a gene known as “HLA-B27”. However, only a small proportion of people overall carrying this gene will develop AS.

Who does it affect?

AS occurs in twice as many men as women. In women, AS is usually mild. AS usually has its onset between the ages of 16 to 35. Race is significant, with AS affecting mainly white skinned people.

Outlook

Whilst AS is a long lasting or chronic disease, much can be done to control and reduce its effects.

The symptoms

Symptoms may include any of the following:

- Chronic back pain
- Stiffness in the back (particularly in the morning)
- Pain in other joints including the neck, knees, ankles and hips
- Pain around tendons and in the heel
- Inflammation of the eyes
- Rashes
- Rarely the heart or the lungs may be affected

Diagnosis

Early diagnosis is important as early treatment can help to minimise pain and help prevent disability. Diagnosis will usually involve a physical examination and medical history and may include further tests such as blood tests and x-rays.

Management

An individual management program may be planned by the doctor and person involved. This will usually include a combination of:

- Medication
- Exercise
- Education

The treatment of A.S. is often a team effort between the person and several types of health care professionals.

Education

A better understanding of AS will assist you to make decisions about the management of your condition. Arthritis Victoria offers education programs to provide people with skills and knowledge and the opportunity to meet others in similar situations.

Arthritis Victoria can put you in touch with local support groups or other relevant organizations and appropriate exercise groups for your condition.

Ankylosing Spondylitis Course

For further information contact:

The Physiotherapist,
Caulfield Community Health Service,
240 Kooyong Road, Caulfield, 3162.
Tel: 9276 6000

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Resource Centre

- Dougados, Maxime and van der Heijde, Desiree (2004), *Fast facts: Ankylosing spondylitis*, Health Press, Oxford.
- Khan, Muhammad Asim (2002), *Ankylosing spondylitis: The facts*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

**All listed books are available on loan from the Arthritis Victoria Resource Centre to members. If you would like to find out more about becoming a member call: (03) 8531 8000.*

Support/Self Help Groups

For information about the support group nearest you, phone our Community Development Co-ordinator on (03) 8531 8000.

Websites

- Spondylitis Association of America: www.spondylitis.org
- National Ankylosing Spondylitis Society (UK): www.nass.co.uk
- Arthritis Vic :www.arthritisvic.org.au
- Arthritis USA: www.arthritis.org
- Arthritis Research Campaign UK: www.arc.org.uk
- National Institute for Arthritis, musculoskeletal and Skin: www.nih.gov/niams
- American College of Rheumatology: www.rheumatology.org
- Medlineplus: www.medlineplus.gov

ARTHRITIS VICTORIA

If you would like further information please contact our telephone information service on

(03) 8531 8000 or **1800 011 041** (country callers)



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Prepared by Education & Services staff, Arthritis Victoria, September 2002. This material is for your information and is not intended to be medical advice. You are encouraged to review the information provided with your doctor or relevant health professional.