

What are things to do when diagnosed with AS?

Newer medication for Ankylosing spondylitis (AS) can help provide much better control of symptoms and help you keep up with your desired lifestyle. Early diagnosis and early treatment are important in being able to attain good results in the long term.

There is no cure for AS at this time. Adjusting to living with a chronic condition can take some time. The following tips may help you better manage your symptoms.

Learn about your AS



You are your own best advocate. Learn to be responsible for your own wellbeing.



- Learn about AS. It is important to get your information from reliable sources. See below.



Talk to your healthcare provider about other resources. Do not be afraid to ask questions.



Self management courses aim to provide you with skills so that you stay active in maintaining your health.



Learn about your medications used to treat AS and how to best take them.








Schedule regular visits with your rheumatologist and other medical providers. This can help ensure that the disease is well controlled and that the treatments are right for you.

Resources:

- Contact your rheumatologist's office: 585-486-0901
 - By phone Monday to Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., or for urgent calls after regular work hours
 - Use MyChart for non-urgent questions
- The American College of Rheumatology <https://www.rheumatology.org/I-Am-A/Patient-Caregiver/Patient-and-Caregiver-Resources>
- The Arthritis Foundation www.arthritis.org
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) <https://www.cdc.gov/arthritis>

Make adjustments to your lifestyle

Most people with AS will need to make some adjustments on how to do everyday tasks and also make lifestyle changes to better manage AS.

<p>Make sure that you stay physically active. Develop a regular exercise program. A physical therapist may provide information on safe activities.</p>	<p>Make adjustments to your diet work towards a healthy, balanced diet.</p> 	<p>Target getting to a healthy weight and work on maintaining that weight</p> 	<p>Smoking can make you more likely to get AS or worsen symptoms.</p> 	<p>Ensure adequate time for rest and sleep.</p> 	<p>Develop methods to reduce stress. This may include meditation, mindfulness based stress reduction, tai chi, yoga, or humor.</p>	<p>Identify your support system (family and friends) and stay engaged.</p> 
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Emotional needs



- It can be natural to experience emotional and mental stress when facing a chronic illness such as AS.
- You may feel scared, frustrated, sad, or angry, or may have resentment at various times during your disease.



- Being a part of a support group that includes other persons with AS can help provide emotional support and better knowledge of the disease process.



- Depression and anxiety are common in AS. Learn to identify symptoms, such as:
 - Feeling tired all the time
 - Reduced appetite
 - Difficulty sleeping
- Seek professional help as soon as possible.



- Focus on positives and celebrate successes:
 - Appreciate yourself as a person
 - Focus on things that make you feel good
 - Surround yourself with people who support, respect, and encourage you
 - Learn to advocate for yourself.