

# Physical Therapy

## How it can help with Ankylosing Spondylitis

### What is Ankylosing Spondylitis (AS)?

- It is an inflammatory disease
- It can cause some of the vertebrae in your spine to join together
- It makes the spine less flexible
- It can result in a hunched-forward posture
- It may make it difficult to breathe
- Signs and symptoms typically occur in early adulthood



### Symptoms of AS

The severity of the symptoms varies for each individual. Some of the typical symptoms are:

- Gradual onset of back pain and stiffness
- Early-morning stiffness and pain, reducing during the day with movement
- Pain lasting for more than 3 months
- Weight loss
- Exhaustion
- Feverish and night sweats

“**Physiotherapy and exercise can have a big effect on the outcome of your AS**”

– *Canadian Spondylitis Association Guidebook*

**You can manage AS by a combination of medication and exercise to reduce pain and inflammation.**

### Practical Advice

- Keep good **posture**. Think tall all day!
- Get a suitable **chair**. The seat shouldn't be too long. Avoid low, soft chairs as it will encourage bad posture and increase pain.
- **Stand up, walk around, and stretch!** Try not to sit for too long.
- Reduce pain and stiffness by trying a **hot** bath or shower first thing in the morning or before bed.
- Decrease swelling with **ice packs**. Do not leave an ice pack in place for more than 10 minutes!



Saskatchewan  
Physiotherapy  
Association

Find a physiotherapist near you at [www.saskphysio.org](http://www.saskphysio.org)

## Physiotherapy and Exercise Will Manage Your Pain!

Some of the ways your physiotherapist can help:

**Create a personal exercise and stretching routine** to manage pain and stiffness.

**Correct your posture** to manage pain.

**Maintain good range of movement** so you can accomplish daily tasks easier.

**Design cardiovascular exercises** to improve chest expansion, decrease fatigue, and improve sleep.

**Apply heat, cold, massage, laser therapy, ultrasound, and other electrophysical therapies** to relieve pain.

### In Partnership With:

This document was created to spread information on how physical therapy can help people affected by Ankylosing Spondylitis. Students from the School of Physical Therapy have created this document in partnership with the Saskatchewan Physical Therapy Association and the Canadian Spondylitis Society.

To learn more about AS and to receive a copy of the Ankylosing Spondylitis Guidebook, contact the Canadian Spondylitis Association at:

<http://www.spondylitis.ca>

To find a physical therapist in your area, go to:

<http://saskphysio.org/find-a-physiotherapist>



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