

What is Ankylosing Spondylitis?

While anyone can get ankylosing spondylitis, it is more likely to affect men than women.

1 Introduction

Ankylosing spondylitis, also known as Bechterew's disease, is a type of arthritis that causes inflammation in the joints and ligaments of the spine. The inflammation of the spine can lead to chronic pain and disability if left untreated. In severe cases, it can cause the vertebrae to fuse, leading to a rigid and inflexible spine.

2 Symptoms

Symptoms of ankylosing spondylitis can vary from person to person; some may experience mild symptoms while others have a more chronic case. These are the most common symptoms experienced:

- Pain, stiffness and inflammation in joints like the ribs, shoulders, knees or feet
- Vision changes and eye pain
- Difficulty taking deep breaths
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite or weight loss
- Skin rashes, especially psoriasis
- Abdominal pain and loose bowel movements

3 Diagnosis

While there is no specific test that can definitively diagnose ankylosing spondylitis, the following are just a few of the tests that are used to help guide diagnosis:

- **Imaging test.** Medical professionals can check for changes in joints and bones using X-rays and MRIs.
- **Lab test.** While there is no specific lab test to identify the disease, certain blood tests can check for markers of inflammation.

4 Treatments

The main goal when treating ankylosing spondylitis is to relieve pain and stiffness in the spine and to delay further complications. Some healthcare providers may prescribe patients nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) or, in more severe cases, a tumor necrosis factor (TNF) blocker or an interleukin-17 (IL-17) inhibitor. Physical therapy and exercise also play an important role in managing the symptoms of the disease. Only a small number of people with more serious cases may need surgery.

Did you know?

About 95% of people with ankylosing spondylitis have a variation of the human leukocyte antigen-B gene (HLA-B).

For more information on ankylosing spondylitis and supportive resources, please visit [mayoclinic.org](https://www.mayoclinic.org)

References:

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/ankylosing-spondylitis/symptoms-causes/syc-20354808>

<https://www.niams.nih.gov/health-topics/ankylosing-spondylitis>

<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/16595-ankylosing-spondylitis>