

MANAGING YOUR CONDITION

COPING STRATEGIES

Managing your condition as best you can means doing more than taking your treatment as prescribed. You can also benefit from certain coping strategies. Here are some ways to help you cope, based on the condition you have been diagnosed with.

ANKYLOSING SPONDYLITIS (AS)

Stretch your muscles

Stretching exercises can help relieve pain and maintain flexibility of your joints and muscles.

Practice deep breathing

Lying on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the ground:

- Place your hands on the sides of your chest. Breathe in deeply through your nose and out through your mouth. Push your ribs out against your hands as you breathe in. (Repeat approx. 10 times.)
- Place your hands on the upper part of the front of your chest. Breathe in deeply through your nose and then breathe out as far as you can through your mouth. Again, push your ribs up against your hands as you breathe in. (Repeat approx. 10 times.)

Stay active with low-impact exercises

Low-impact exercise may help promote joint health, boost muscle strength, and increase your flexibility and stamina. Consider these low-impact activities:

- Swimming
- Basic yoga
- Walking

Remember not to overdo it. In general, if you experience pain for more than an hour after you exercise, you probably pushed yourself too hard. Also, let your doctor know if exercising causes any of the following: ongoing fatigue or weakness, reduced mobility in your joints, joint swelling, or continuing pain. Be sure to talk to your doctor before beginning an exercise program.

Watch your posture

Correct it whether you're standing, sitting, or walking.

Maintain a healthy, balanced diet

Healthy eating is recommended for everyone. Although there's no special diet for people with AS, you can keep in mind the following tips:

- Eat foods low in saturated and trans fat
- Eat foods richer in omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids
- Include milk products in your diet; they are important
- Go for the lower-fat options and limit trans fats

- Select lean meat and alternatives such as beans, lentils, and tofu
- Include all food types, such as grains and cereals, fruits and vegetables, dairy, and meat and alternatives in balanced proportions in your diet plan
- Meet your daily needs for vitamins, minerals, and other necessary nutrients
- Consider adding these foods to your usual diet:
 - Whole grains, which are high in fibre, such as oatmeal
 - Dark green vegetables and milk products, which are high in calcium
 - Fruits, which provide natural sugars
 - Vegetables and fruits rather than juice
 - Fish such as halibut, salmon, and tuna, which contain omega-3 fatty acids
 - Egg yolks, which are a good source of vitamin A
- Try to avoid these foods:
 - Salt, alcohol, and caffeine
 - Fried foods
 - Fizzy drinks

Before starting a new diet, please consult your doctor or a dietician.

Use heat and cold to your advantage

You can use hot or cold compresses (or warm or cool showers) to help reduce your symptoms. But always remember to use a protective barrier, such as a towel, between the warm or cold pack and your skin. Heat should not be applied to an already inflamed joint, but it can be used for:

- Relieving pain
- Relieving muscle spasms and tightness
- Enhancing range of motion

Cold, on the other hand, is ideal for:

- Decreasing swelling
- Decreasing pain
- Constricting blood flow to an inflamed joint

Protect your joints

Always avoid putting extra stress on your joints. This will reduce your pain and help you to perform daily tasks more easily. Techniques to protect your joints include:

- Pacing by switching between heavy or repetitive tasks and lighter tasks to give your joints a break
- Positioning your joints wisely (for example, avoid squatting and kneeling, and carry heavy items at waist level whenever possible)
- Using assistive devices

MANAGING YOUR CONDITION

COPING STRATEGIES

PSORIATIC ARTHRITIS (PSA) AND RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS (RA)

Stay active with low-impact exercises

Low-impact exercise may promote joint health, help relieve pain, and keep the muscles and tendons strong and flexible. Some exercise tips to consider:

- Stretching exercises can help relieve pain and maintain flexibility of your joints and muscles
- Warm-up stretching can increase circulation and loosen muscles before exercise
- Range-of-motion exercises such as raising your arms over your head or rolling your shoulders forward and backward can relieve stiffness and increase your ability to move
- Low-impact aerobic exercise such as walking can improve your general fitness by reducing strain on your joints, ligaments, and muscles
- Simple yoga exercises can help release tension and promote balance and posture
- Swimming is a great low-impact exercise for your body



Remember not to push yourself too hard. This will overwork your muscles and aggravate your joint pain. Take a break or slow down if you experience any pain that is more severe than your regular joint pain, or inflammation or redness of your joints. And remember it is very important to consult your doctor before beginning a new exercise routine.

Maintain a healthy, balanced diet

Healthy eating is recommended for everyone. Although there's no special diet for people with PSA or RA, you can keep in mind the following tips:

- Eat foods low in saturated and trans fat
- Eat foods richer in omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids

- Include milk products in your diet; they are important
- Go for the lower-fat options and limit trans fats
- Select lean meat and alternatives such as beans, lentils, and tofu
- Include all food types, such as grains and cereals, fruits and vegetables, dairy, and meat and alternatives in balanced proportions in your diet plan
- Meet your daily needs for vitamins, minerals, and other necessary nutrients
- Consider adding these foods to your usual diet:
 - Whole grains, which are high in fibre, such as oatmeal
 - Dark green vegetables and milk products, which are high in calcium
 - Fruits, which provide natural sugars
 - Vegetables and fruits rather than juice
 - Fish such as halibut, salmon, and tuna, which contain omega-3 fatty acids
 - Egg yolks, which are a good source of vitamin A
- Try to avoid these foods:
 - Salt, alcohol, and caffeine
 - Fried foods
 - Fizzy drinks

Before starting a new diet, please consult your doctor or a dietician.

Use heat and cold to your advantage

You can use hot or cold compresses (or warm or cool showers) to help reduce your symptoms. But always remember to use a protective barrier, such as a towel, between the warm or cold pack and your skin. Heat should not be applied to an already inflamed joint, but it can be used for:

- Relieving pain
- Relieving muscle spasms and tightness
- Enhancing range of motion

Cold, on the other hand, is ideal for:

- Decreasing swelling
- Decreasing pain
- Constricting blood flow to an inflamed joint

Protect your joints

Always avoid putting extra stress on your joints. For example, try:

- Lifting heavy objects with both hands
- Pushing doors open with your whole body instead of just your fingers
- Using assistive devices

Maintain a healthy weight

If you're at a healthy body weight, you're putting less strain on your joints than if you were overweight. This leads to reduced pain and increased energy and mobility. The best way to increase nutrients while limiting calories is to eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.

HEALTHY LIVING

Managing your condition also involves making healthy lifestyle choices, including:

Staying active

It is recommended that adults get at least 2 ½ hours of physical activity each week, while children should be getting 60 minutes each day. Depending on your condition and the severity of your symptoms, however, your treatment team will tell you how much exercise you should be doing, and they'll also tell you which activities are safe for you. But remember to always talk to your doctor before trying anything new.



Maintaining a healthy diet

Eating well is an important step towards better overall health and maintaining a healthy body weight. You should aim to eat the recommended amount and type of food found in Canada's Food Guide, which you can find online at: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php>. Plus, you can also help manage your symptoms by eating certain foods and avoiding others. Keep in mind the following general tips:

- Eat foods low in saturated and trans fat
- Eat foods richer in omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids
- Include milk products in your diet; they are important
- Go for the lower-fat options and limit trans fats

- Select lean meat and alternatives such as beans, lentils, and tofu
- Include all food types, such as grains and cereals, fruits and vegetables, dairy, and meat and alternatives in balanced proportions in your diet plan
- Meet your daily needs for vitamins, minerals, and other necessary nutrients
- Consider adding these foods to your usual diet:
 - Whole grains, which are high in fibre, such as oatmeal
 - Dark green vegetables and milk products, which are high in calcium
 - Fruits, which provide natural sugars
 - Vegetables and fruits rather than juice
 - Fish such as halibut, salmon, and tuna, which contain omega-3 fatty acids
 - Egg yolks, which are a good source of vitamin A
- Try to avoid these foods:
 - Salt, alcohol, and caffeine
 - Fried foods
 - Fizzy drinks



Before starting a new diet, please consult your doctor or a dietician.

Avoiding stress

Being relaxed can help you cope with what you're dealing with and help you feel more in control of your condition. Plus, in some cases, stress can actually trigger a flare-up, so finding ways to avoid feeling overwhelmed may help keep your symptoms away.