



DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

Managing Ankylosing Spondylitis

When you have ankylosing spondylitis, there's a lot to learn and deal with. Asking the right questions during your conversation will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate your condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

Vocabulary to Know

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

Ankylosing Spondylitis	Spondylitis means inflammation of the joints in the spine. Ankylosing means a bone or joint becomes stiff or joined by ankylosis, which is an abnormal fusing of the bones.
Autoimmune Disease	A condition where the immune system works to destroy healthy tissues in the body because it mistakes them for dangerous invaders, such as a virus or bacteria.
HLA-B27 Gene	A gene believed to increase your risk of developing ankylosing spondylitis. Doctors generally test for it when making a diagnosis. However, the presence of the gene doesn't mean you have or will have the disease, it just means your risk is elevated.
Elevated Erythrocyte Sedimentation Rate (sed rate or ESR)	A blood test that helps diagnose ankylosing spondylitis and many other conditions, which measures how quickly red blood cells settle to the bottom of a container as a sign of inflammation. However, it doesn't indicate whether inflammation comes from chronic disease, infection, or injury. Thus, it's only part of a diagnostic process.
C-Reactive Protein (CRP)	A protein found in plasma. Inflammation makes concentrations rise significantly, so this test is another sign of inflammation that may indicate an inflammatory disease, but it can't specifically diagnose ankylosing spondylitis. Doctors typically test your CRP concentration while making a diagnosis.
Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)	Medications that reduce pain, inflammation, and fever. The most common ones are the over-the-counter medications ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil), naproxen (Aleve), and aspirin, but several prescription NSAIDs are also available.
Disease-Modifying Antirheumatic Drug (DMARD)	Medications that slow the progression of joint damage in ankylosing spondylitis. This isn't a class of drugs, but an umbrella term for numerous, unrelated drugs used to fight this disease.
Biologic Agents	Living organisms or products of living organisms. They can be used to prevent, diagnose, or treat certain diseases.
TNF Inhibitors	Drugs that block your body's response to something called tumor necrosis factor (TNF). TNF is part of the inflammatory response, so inhibiting it can lead to less inflammation and pain. (This doesn't mean your disease involves tumors.)
IL-17 Inhibitors	A specialized cell in your immune system that promotes inflammation. Drugs that inhibit it can lower inflammation and the resulting pain in ankylosing spondylitis and other inflammatory conditions.

