

ANKYLOSING SPONDYLITIS

EXERCISES WITH MICHAEL SLATER

Important: Please read the information provided on the last page before attempting any exercises. Please consult your healthcare professional before you attempt these exercises.

EXERCISE 1: SEATED ROTATION

- Begin the exercise sitting straight on a chair or exercise ball, feet flat on the ground and your head facing forward.
- Place your left arm behind your left buttocks and your right hand on your left knee. Rotate your trunk looking over your left shoulder – holding when you feel a slight stretch but are still comfortable. Hold position for a few seconds.
- Swap sides and repeat exercise.
- Complete two turns per side.

Please note: Chairs with arm rests are helpful for this exercise as it helps you to lever off the arm rest as opposed to your thigh.



EXERCISE 2: HEAD TURNING

- Sitting on an exercise ball or chair, slowly turn your head to the right, looking over your right shoulder but keeping your trunk facing forward.
- Place your left hand behind you to stop extra rotation through the spine. Hold for a few seconds.
- You may place your right hand on your front (left) jaw line to help your head turn a little further.
- Slowly turn your head back to the centre and repeat on the other side, swapping hands.
- Repeat the exercise twice on each side.



EXERCISE 3: TRUNK CURL AND STRETCH

- Sitting on an exercise ball or normal chair, start in an upright posture, facing forward with your hands on your knees.
- Slowly roll down the spine one section at a time, running your hands down the legs until you feel a stretch through your spine.
- When you achieve this final position, let your head hang heavy so that it's a dead weight hanging from your shoulders. Hold for the count of 10.
- Slowly roll your spine back to an upright position, bringing your palms facing forwards and feeling a stretch across the chest.
- Repeat the exercise. As you roll back down and reach the bottom, this time exhale a full breath out.
- Rolling back up, when you reach the top – face palms forward and inhale a full breath.



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EXERCISE 4: FULL BACK STRETCH

- a. Kneeling on the ground on all fours, start in a four-point kneeling position keeping your hands directly under your shoulders and knees directly under your hips. Breathe out as you sink into the stretch.

Please note: If you have sore knees feel free to kneel on a pillow/towel.

- b. Slowly bring your bottom down towards your heels and your chest towards the floor, as far as you comfortably can. Hold the position for a few seconds. Remember to breathe out as you sink into the stretch.

- c. Slowly move back into the starting position.

- d. Repeat the exercise, trying to stretch back a little bit further each time. You should feel a good stretch the whole way through the lower back and shoulder blades.

- e. If you would like to increase the stretch, place your hands to one side of your body and then draw your bottom back over the heels on the other side.

- f. Repeat on the opposite side. You should feel the stretch between your shoulder and your hip.

Please note: This exercise is particularly good if you feel one side is tighter than the other.



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EXERCISE 5: BACK ARCH

- Lay down flat on your stomach and raise the top half of your body slightly off the floor by propping up your elbows – sink your spine, chest and shoulder blades down toward the floor making sure not to overextend the neck, rather look straight ahead. Hold for a few seconds.
- Relax and lower your body back down, returning to a flat position on your stomach. Remain here for a few seconds then repeat exercise.
- Allow your chin to drop down to your chest – this will provide a stretch through the back of your neck and shoulder blades. Then look forward and let your chest drop again.

Please note: This exercise helps maintain posture.

- To make the exercise a little more advanced – bring the hands back, level with the armpits. Perform the same movement but push up a little bit higher through the arms, making sure your hips stay in contact with the floor. Remain in this position for a few seconds and relax back down to the floor.

Please note: You should feel a good stretch, sometimes agreeable discomfort but certainly don't push through pain.



FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

For further information on ankylosing spondylitis or to view the complete exercise video, *Working out with Michael Slater*, visit the Arthritis Australia website at www.arthritisaustralia.com.au and follow the links.

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Disclaimer

The following exercise sheet for ankylosing spondylitis (AS) has been produced in conjunction with the Australian Physiotherapy Association and highlights key areas most commonly affected by AS. However, it is not a comprehensive range of exercises nor is it tailored for your specific individual needs. Neither Arthritis Australia nor the Australian Physiotherapy Association make any representations or warranties as to the effectiveness of the exercises contained in this video in relieving the symptoms of AS or improving your posture and/or flexibility or the appropriateness of the exercises for a particular purpose.

Prior to undertaking any of the exercises demonstrated in this exercise sheet you should consult your physiotherapist, rheumatologist or other suitably qualified medical practitioner as to the suitability of the exercises for you. This exercise sheet should be used as a guide only and is not a substitute for the advice or prescribed course of treatment of qualified medical practitioners, physiotherapists, or rheumatologists.

By using this exercise sheet, you agree to:

- consult your physiotherapist or rheumatologist before undertaking this or any other exercise program;
- seek guidance from a physiotherapist or rheumatologist if unsure about any of the exercises contained in this exercise sheet;
- stop immediately and consult a healthcare professional if at any stage the exercises in this exercise sheet hurt or cause discomfort; and
- use reasonable care, skill and judgment when performing any of the exercises shown on this exercise sheet.

Exclusion of Liability

Participation in any of the exercises shown on this exercise sheet is at your own risk. By using this exercise sheet or performing the exercises demonstrated, you acknowledge and accept that, to the extent permitted by law, neither Arthritis Australia nor the Australian Physiotherapy Association will be under any liability to you whatsoever, whether in contract or tort (including, without limitation, negligence), breach of statute or any other legal or equitable obligation, in respect of any injury, loss or damage (including loss of profit or savings), howsoever caused, which may be suffered or incurred by the reader or any other person.

Ankylosing Spondylitis Exercise Tips

- If you have AS, it is important to maintain good posture and mobility of the spine. The exercises in this exercise sheet are designed to help you do this.
- You should do some specific exercises for your AS every day. This exercise sheet highlights several key targets and is designed to get you started. Consistency is the key to gaining maximum benefit.
- Remember, everyone is different and can manage different activity levels. None of the exercises in this exercise sheet should hurt; however, you should feel a good stretch.
- Exercises which move and stretch the body, strengthen the postural muscles which help keep you up straight, and improve your breathing and chest expansion are all important. At least 30 minutes of specific exercise should be done each day, targeting different parts of the body and different movements, ensuring the whole body is stretched and moved daily.
- The best exercise programs are individually tailored. A physiotherapist can help design a program to meet your specific needs.
- Activities and sports that improve your general fitness are an important inclusion in your total management plan.

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