



Ankylosing Spondylitis 僵直性脊椎炎

Ankylosing Spondylitis (AS) is an easily ignored disease which often happens to people at their 20s to 40s with male to female ratio of 5 to 1; and the estimated prevalence takes up to 0.2% of the total population in Taiwan.

What are the characteristics of AS?

1. Low back and buttock pain with morning stiffness
2. Limited range of motion over spine
3. Alleviated symptoms after exercises
4. Genetically inheritable
5. Except lumbago, there could be other symptoms, such as peripheral arthritis, uveitis or enthesitis.

How to diagnose AS?

AS can be diagnosed by detailed medical history inquiry, physical examination, radiography, and HLA-B27 gene. 90% patients are HLA-B27 gene positive.

What are the treatments for AS?

1. Exercise and physical treatment:

To AS patients, exercise is vital and helpful in reducing painfulness, maintaining spinal moving range, and promoting life quality. There is no restriction over the types of exercise as long as it helps with joint movements. Exercises like soft gymnastics, swimming, jogging, and dances are good choices. Patients should avoid cycling and violent sports like boxing. Maintain correct posture and try not to stay at the same posture like being a couch potato for a long time. Stretch your body and vertebra to prevent spinal deformation.

2. Medical treatment

a. NSAID (non-steroid anti-inflammatory drug)

NSAIDs are first-line treatment for AS patients and the efficacy have been established.

b. Immune modulation drug

Sulfasalazine is commonly used because it is equipped with the function of regulating immune system. Take one or two tablets, with 500 milligrams each, after breakfast and supper.

c. Biologic agents

Etanercept, Adalimumab or Golimumab are used in moderate or severe Ankylosing Spondylitis

3. Surgery

Surgery is used to improve joint function of patients with severe spinal deformity.

How about the AS disease course and its prognosis?

AS course is usually chronic and repetitive; since the prognosis of AS is quite good, it does not affect patients' life span; 90% patients in a way still possess good life quality.