

treatments before finding the one that is right for you. Treatment for AS usually involves:

- physiotherapy exercises (such as hydrotherapy or exercises in water), to keep the spine flexible and improve posture
- medicines, such as:
 - analgesics (pain relievers, such as paracetamol)
 - non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)
 - corticosteroid medicines or injections
 - disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs)
 - biological DMARDs.

For more information about medicines see the Australian Rheumatology Association's Patient Medicine Information or the *Medicines and arthritis information* sheet.

What can I do?

See a rheumatologist. A rheumatologist can diagnose AS and make sure you get the right treatment. If you have AS and have not seen a rheumatologist, ask your doctor about a referral. See the *Working with your healthcare team* information sheet.

Learn about AS and play an active role in your treatment. Not all information you read or hear about is trustworthy so always talk to your doctor or healthcare

team about treatments you are thinking about trying. Reliable sources of further information are also listed in the section below. Self management courses aim to help you develop skills to be actively involved in your healthcare. Contact your local Arthritis Office for details of these courses.

Learn ways to manage pain. See the *Dealing with pain* information sheet.

Live a healthy life. Eat a healthy diet, stop smoking and reduce stress to help your overall health and wellbeing. See the *Healthy eating* information sheet.

Stay active. It is important to do regular sports and activities for general fitness and wellbeing. See the *Physical activity* information sheet or ask your physiotherapist for advice.

Acknowledge your feelings and seek support. As there is no cure for AS and it can affect many parts of your life, it is natural to feel scared, frustrated, sad and sometimes angry. Be aware of these feelings and get help if they start affecting your daily life. See the *Arthritis and emotions* information sheet.

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL ARTHRITIS OFFICE FOR MORE INFORMATION SHEETS ON ARTHRITIS.

Learn about AS and your treatment options. See a rheumatologist as early as possible.

For more information:

For more on living well with AS HPUP www.empowered.org.au
Australian Rheumatology Association - information about medicines and seeing a rheumatologist www.rheumatology.org.au

To find a physiotherapist, ask your doctor, contact the Australian Physiotherapy Association on 1300 306 622 or use the 'find a physio' feature at www.physiotherapy.asn.au

The Australian Rheumatology Association collects information on how well these drugs work and how often they cause problems.

The best way to get this information is from you! Sign up to the ARAD project now by Email: ARAD@monash.edu Ph: Sydney 02 9463 1889 or Melbourne 03 9508 3424 www.ARAD.org.au