

## Ankylosing Spondylitis...

Also known as bamboo spine, this is an inflammatory disease affecting joints in the spine and pelvis and sometimes the rib cage, which becomes fused, causing stiffness, rigidity and pain, particularly after resting.

Treatment.

### DIETARY

\* reduce intakes of sugar and starchy foods (pasta, potatoes). Increase intake of pulses and vegetables.

\* if you are regularly taking painkillers for this condition, it is advisable to increase your intake of vitamin C, found in fresh fruit and juices; iron, found in red meat, poultry, fish and green vegetables, and vitamin A, found in liver, kidney, egg yolk, butter, fortified margarine, whole milk and cream.

### AROMATHERAPY

\* Add 5-8 drops of essential oil of lavender, basil or rosemary to the bath to promote relaxation and relieve pain.

### HOMOEOPATHY

\* a few drops of Arnica tincture placed in a hour bath will relieve aching and stiffness.

### HYDROTHERAPY

\* hot and cold compresses provide relief from pain and stiffness and can be as often as required. Prepare two bowls of water, one of hot water but not boiling water, one with cold. If the pain is in the back, lie face down and have partner fold a towel in three, roll it up and dip it in the hot water. Wring it out well, unroll it and place the towel, still folded, over the painful area for 3 minutes. Do the same with the second towel in the cold water. Remove the hot towel and place the cold one on the same area for about 1 minute. Keep repeating the sequence for about twenty minutes.

### EXERCISE

\* gentle daily exercise is vital in preventing rigidity - swimming is particularly good.

### YOGA

\* yoga also helps to maintain mobility by providing general stretching, and breathing exercises to open the ribcage. The following exercises and postures should be carried out daily.

# kneel on the floor, place one hand on your stomach and the other on your chest. Inhale, allowing your stomach to bulge out, then slowly exhale, feeling your stomach deflate. Repeat this pattern of breathing slowly for several minutes.

### PROFESSIONAL HELP

\* osteopathy, chiropractor and massage help relieve pain and increase mobility. Acupuncture also helps relieve pain. Individual homoeopathic prescribing has shown good results.

### ORTHODOX

\* painkillers (aspirin, paracetamol) are offered, though long-term use can result in dietary deficiencies (bleeding of the stomach leading to loss of iron), and the development of ulcers. Anti-inflammatory drugs and steroids may also be recommended along with physiotherapy to help maintain flexibility.