

# Stretching exercises

This information is general exercise information for people with ankylosing spondylitis and may not suit all individuals. Your healthcare professional is the best person to advise you on what activities are suitable for you depending on the severity of your condition and your treatment plan.

Stretching exercises may improve your posture and may help to maintain mobility in the spine and improve flexibility. A stretching program should be done consistently, targeting different parts of the body and different movements so that the whole body is stretched and moved daily. Below are a few stretching examples.



## Prone on elbows

- Lying on your stomach, slowly lift yourself up on your elbows so your upper body is off the ground.
- Keep your hips and legs on the floor.
- If you can, straighten your arms to the front.
- Hold for 10–20 seconds. Return to the start position and repeat.



## Seated thoracic extension

- Sitting upright on a chair with your feet flat on the floor, place your hands behind your head with elbows out to the side.
- While keeping your head still, slowly roll the top of your spine over the back of the chair.
- Hold for 5–10 seconds. Return to the start position and repeat.



## Quadricep stretch

- Lying on your stomach, loop a strap or belt around the top of one foot.
- Slowly pull the strap or belt forward, over your shoulder, until you feel a stretch in your thigh.
- Hold for 10–20 seconds. Return to the start position and repeat with the other leg.



## Seated figure four stretch

- Sitting upright on a chair with your feet flat on the floor, lift your right leg and place it on top of your left thigh, just above your knee.
- Your legs should form the shape of number '4'.
- While keeping your spine straight, slowly hinge forward.
- Hold for 10–20 seconds. Return to the start position and repeat with the other leg.



## Plank

- Lying on your stomach with your forearms on the floor, tighten your core muscles and lift your hips off the floor.
- You can either stay on your elbows or straighten your arms.
- Tighten your buttock muscles and keep your body straight off the floor.
- Hold for 10–20 seconds. Return to the start position and repeat.

**References:** 1. Arthritis Australia. Taking control of your ankylosing spondylitis. Available at: [arthritisaustralia.com.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Ankylosing-Spondylitis-WEB-2019.pdf](https://arthritisaustralia.com.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Ankylosing-Spondylitis-WEB-2019.pdf) [accessed October 2023]. 2. Spondylitis Association of America. Exercise. Available at: [spondylitis.org/about-spondylitis/treatment-information/exercise/](https://spondylitis.org/about-spondylitis/treatment-information/exercise/) [accessed October 2023]. 3. Creaky Joints. 6 daily stretches for ankylosing spondylitis that can help ease pain. Available at: <https://creakyjoints.org/about-arthritis/axial-spondyloarthritis/axspa-healthy-living/ankylosing-spondylitis-stretches-exercises/> [accessed October 2023].