



**Spondylitis
Association
of America™**

ACTION PLAN

to Manage Spondylitis



Learn About Spondylitis



Find Support



How To Get Involved

Spondylitis Association of America

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Action Plan to Manage Spondylitis

Contents

Introduction	3
STEP1: Learn About Spondylitis	4
www.spondylitis.org	4
SWIFT www.teens.spondylitis.org	5
Publications and Materials	5
Educational Seminars	6
Webinars	6
Podcasts	7
STEP 2: Find Support	8
National Educational Support Group Network	8
Network of PEERS (Peer Mentor Program)	8
SAA Message Boards	8
Social Networking Sites	8
Toll-Free Information Line	9
STEP 3: Become Your Own Healthcare Advocate	10
When Should Someone See a Rheumatologist?	10
Questions to Ask When Screening a Rheumatologist	10
Before Your First Appointment	10
Your First Appointment	11
Questions to Ask During Your Appointment	11
Understanding Your Health Plan and What it Covers	12
Pre-existing Conditions and the Uninsured	14
Other Resources	15

Where to Go For Help with Medical and Prescription Costs16

STEP 4: Consider Getting Involved.....19

Opportunities to Get Involved19

Conclusion21

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The Spondylitis Association is solely responsible for the content of all educational programs.

Introduction

Whether you have been newly diagnosed with ankylosing spondylitis or a related condition, or someone close to you has been newly diagnosed, spondylitis and its associated social, functional, and economic consequences make disease management an important issue. It is especially important to take an active role in managing spondylitis, backed by a sound knowledge base, because it will have a positive influence on how you live with this disease. It is our hope that the information provided in this action plan will provide guidance to make a positive impact on how you manage your spondylitis.

STEP 1: Learn about Spondylitis

It is important for you to learn as much as possible about ankylosing spondylitis and its related diseases. SAA provides a variety of resources with information to learn about spondylitis, listed below.

www.spondylitis.org

Visit SAA's website, which is updated regularly with the latest news and information about spondylitis treatment, medications and research. In addition, information about SAA events and seminars, supportive programs and the online Message Board community can also be found here. The website is organized as follows:

Home: The home page highlights different sections of SAA's website.

About Spondylitis: In this section, you will find information about the five diseases included in the category of spondyloarthritis, referred to as spondylitis for short. Find information about the symptoms, diagnosis, treatment, medications, and alternative therapies for each of these diseases. In addition, this section provides video and audio files from the spondylitis experts, a compilation of questions asked by spondylitis patients over the years and a spondylitis expert's response to each question.

Resources & Support: Here you will find information about the various support programs that SAA offers to spondylitis patients and their families, including information about SAA Events, seminars and webinars, our National Educational Spondylitis Support Group Network, online community, Message Boards and Forums, our Peer Mentor Program Network of PEERS, links to SAA's social networking pages, as well as Resources for Physicians and other Medical Professionals.

News: Each week, SAA provides news stories related to the research and treatment of spondylitis. In this section, you will find the most recent news stories as well as an archive of older articles. There is also information about upcoming SAA events.

Members Area: In this section, SAA Members can log in to get exclusive access to the benefits of SAA Membership. Benefits include:

- Subscription to our quarterly advertising-free news magazine *Spondylitis Plus* including the online archive dating back to 2003
- Library of podcasts (monthly audio interviews with experts on a variety of topics)
- Webinar (online seminar) recordings
- Video from seminars

- SAA Member to Member Recommended Rheumatologist Directory
- Member Resource Directory, a listing of social service referrals
- eBook: Your Guide to Living with Ankylosing Spondylitis
- Downloadable educational brochures

In addition, SAA Members can update their contact information.

Non-members can listen to a sample podcast and view a sample issue of *Spondylitis Plus*. *Join SAA today to receive access to all podcasts, Spondylitis Plus, and more!*

Advocacy: SAA is the only nonprofit organization in the United States dedicating all of its resources to raise awareness, provide education, and promote research to ensure a better life for all spondylitis patients. In this section, you will find details about SAA's Advocacy Priorities and a list of SAA's advocacy accomplishments over the years.

In addition, we provide suggestions on how you can advocate on behalf of the spondylitis community, including Tools for Advocates and action steps to ensure that your voice is heard.

Research: For over 25 years, the Spondylitis Association of America has encouraged and facilitated collaborations among prominent researchers as a means of accelerating advances in spondylitis research, diagnosis and treatment. This section provides the history of SAA's efforts in research and a list of research milestones with articles about these critical developments.

This section also includes Current Research Studies and information on how to get involved, Related Spondylitis Research conducted by members of our Scientific and Medical Advisory Board as well as SPARTAN (Spondyloarthritis Research and Treatment Network), and a Research Article Archive.

SWIFT www.teens.spondylitis.org

Spondylitis Web Info for Teens (SWIFT) is the first website of its kind for teens living with spondylitis. SWIFT was developed with the help of teens and includes information about how to manage spondylitis and its impact on school, sports and activities, and relationships, with tips and stories from teens living with spondylitis

Publications and Materials

SAA produces a wide range of publications and materials with information specifically targeted to the spondylitis community. These include:

- Educational Brochures – SAA publishes seven different brochures, available for free to people impacted by spondylitis. These brochures include:

- *Spondyloarthritis: A Family of Related Diseases*
- *What is Ankylosing Spondylitis?*
- *Iritis (Eye Inflammation in Spondyloarthritis)*
- *Childhood Onset Spondyloarthritis*
- *The Role of Exercise in Spondyloarthritis*
- *Spondyloarthritis: Just Diagnosed*
- *Spondyloarthritis: Also a Woman's Disease*
- *Spondylitis Plus* – Our award-winning, advertisement-free, quarterly news magazine is distributed to SAA Members with information on the latest in spondylitis treatments, issues related to managing spondylitis, tips for daily living and personal stories from people within the spondylitis community. For a subscription to our magazine, join SAA today.
- *Straight Talk on Spondylitis* – This internationally recognized book, written specifically for the spondylitis patient, contains information on therapies and treatment, a comprehensive list of medications, activities and exercise programs and tips for coping with the psychological challenges of living with a chronic illness. Also included with the book is a free pullout exercise poster to help you maintain an effective fitness program to ensure continued mobility and flexibility.
- *Back in Action Exercise DVD* – SAA's popular exercise DVD includes demonstrations on a full range of flexibility, stretching, and strengthening exercises for the spondylitis patient.

Educational Seminars

Each year SAA travels across the country to host free educational seminars in different metropolitan areas throughout the United States. All seminars include an experienced rheumatologist who provides an overview of spondyloarthritis along with current medications and other available treatments. Secondary speakers complement the program with presentations on other topics of interest including exercise, physical therapy, occupational therapy, the emotional impact of living with spondylitis, etc. These seminars provide an opportunity for attendees to ask questions and meet other people from the area impacted by spondylitis. To find out about upcoming SAA events, visit: http://www.spondylitis.org/patient_resources/seminar.aspx

Webinars

SAA offers free online seminar events, referred to as webinars. These webinars allow people to learn about specific spondylitis-related topics in the comfort of their home without having to

travel. SAA hosts approximately 3 webinars each year; the live event is free and open to everyone in the spondylitis community. The recordings are made available exclusively to Members in the Member area of spondylitis.org.

Podcasts

These monthly audio recordings are an exclusive benefit offered to Members only. Each month Programs staff interviews an expert on topics of interest to the spondylitis community. These podcasts provide information on a wide range of topics including spondylitis symptoms, medications, treatment, complications, etc. Members are also asked to submit their own questions to be answered during future podcasts.

STEP 2: Find Support

SAA offers several different ways for patients and their families to connect with others in the spondylitis community. Learn more about these programs:

National Educational Support Group Network

SAA sponsors over 30 support groups stretching across the US from Anchorage, AK to Miami, FL. These groups focus on education and support while providing a safe and friendly environment for people to discuss the day-to-day practical challenges of living with spondylitis. SAA recruits and provides guidance to support group leaders through an interview screening process, trainings, and quarterly conference calls. These groups also play an integral role in helping to increase awareness in their communities through their participation in local health fairs and fundraisers. Find information about the National Educational Support Group Network in the Resources and Support section of [spondylitis.org](http://www.spondylitis.org):

http://www.spondylitis.org/patient_resources/support_groups.aspx

Network of PEERS (People Educated and Empowered to Rise above Spondylitis)

SAA's peer network program provides an opportunity for one-on-one support within the spondylitis community. People newly diagnosed with spondylitis are matched by Programs staff with peers who have years of experience managing their own spondylitis symptoms. This program helps people newly diagnosed with spondylitis feel less isolated, understand the importance of learning about managing the disease, and feel supported and encouraged to empower themselves for optimum health. Peers regularly communicate by email or telephone, with Programs staff checking-in regularly with each peer match to ensure a successful program. Find information about the PEERS program in the Resources and Support section of [spondylitis.org](http://www.spondylitis.org): http://www.spondylitis.org/patient_resources/peers.aspx

SAA Message Boards

Spondylitis.org has an online community that provides an opportunity for spondylitis patients and their loved ones to start and contribute to discussions related to managing spondylitis. Find the Message Boards in the Resources and Support section of [spondylitis.org](http://www.spondylitis.org):

<http://forums.spondylitis.org/ubbthreads.php?ubb=cfrm>

Social Networking Sites

SAA participates on several social networking sites including Facebook, MySpace and Twitter. SAA staff provides updates and information through these online communities to promote SAA's mission. To find SAA's pages on these sites, visit:

- Facebook: <http://tinyurl.com/bzwmw9>
- MySpace: <http://www.myspace.com/spondylitis>
- Twitter: <http://twitter.com/spondylitis>

Toll-Free Information Line

Knowledgeable staff members answer SAA's toll free information line and provide information about spondylitis, support programs, SAA events and additional resources to thousands of callers each year. Call 1-800-777-8189.

STEP 3: Become Your Own Health Care Advocate

You are your own best advocate. Being an empowered patient is the key to success as you navigate through the often-challenging healthcare system. We hope the information contained in this section will provide you with the tools you need to make informed decisions about your healthcare needs.

When Should Someone See a Rheumatologist?

Anyone who thinks they may have spondylitis can read the disease signs and symptoms found in the "About Spondylitis" section of spondylitis.org. Rheumatologists are specialists trained to do the detective work necessary to discover the cause of swelling and pain. It is important to obtain a correct diagnosis early in the disease process so that the person can begin appropriate treatment since many musculoskeletal disorders respond best to treatment during the early stages of disease. Early diagnosis and treatment will be beneficial to the majority of people with spondylitis since most of the functional loss associated with this disease group occurs during the first ten years.

Many people with spondylitis need to be seen by a rheumatologist over an extended period of time rather than being cared for by their primary care doctor (general practitioner). Rheumatic diseases often change or evolve over time; therefore, it is recommended that individuals with spondylitis visit their rheumatologist at least once a year for a regular check-up.

Questions To Ask When Screening a New Rheumatologist:

- Approximately how long will I have to wait to get an appointment?
- Does the doctor see many patients who have spondylitis?
- Does the doctor accept my insurance? Or, what is my co-payment or out-of-pocket cost for a visit? Is full payment required at the time of the appointment?
- Do you accept patient phone calls? If so, when is the best time to reach you?
- Is the doctor available by email?

Before Your First Appointment

Build your own medical history by documenting:

- **Symptoms.** Document all symptoms regardless of their relation to your current issues. Ankylosing spondylitis and its related diseases are systemic diseases and may affect other parts of your body.
- **Previous Tests.** Document the previous tests you have had completed and collect the results from each.

- **Pain.** Write down how much pain you are in each day, where it hurts and how long it lasts. Refer to the NIH Pain Consortium to help evaluate your pain: http://painconsortium.nih.gov/pain_scales/index.html
- **Past and Current Medications.** Document the drugs you have taken in the past to treat your symptoms and the drugs you are currently prescribed. Detail which appeared to help and which did not alleviate symptoms. Be sure to include any over the counter medications, supplements or herbs you are using as well.
- **Your Goals.** Write down what you hope to accomplish while you are at the physician's office to help keep focused.

Your First Appointment

What should you take to your first appointment?

- Take your insurance cards and a photo I.D. so that the office personnel can begin to build a medical file.
- Bring along information about medicines, herbs, and supplements you take including:
 - Name of the drug, herb, or supplement
 - Dosage amounts
 - Schedule
- Know the dates of pertinent visits to other doctors related to your current situation (i.e. orthopedic surgeons, internal medicine doctors).
- Be able to describe your current symptoms and the date of onset. If you have prior x-rays related to your spondylitis, obtain the x-rays and/or reports so the information can be included in your medical records.
- Provide information about past surgeries (procedures, dates, and name of surgeons).

Questions to Ask During Your First Appointment

Consider asking your rheumatologist the following questions:

- (If you have not been diagnosed) Do my symptoms and medical history indicate spondylitis? What type of spondylitis?
- What treatment will be initially prescribed?
- What is the action of each medication prescribed? (i.e. Is it a painkiller? Is it an anti-inflammatory drug?)

- Are there any side effects I should be aware of?
- When should I expect to notice an improvement of my symptoms?
- If this treatment plan does not work, what would be my next option?
- How will you monitor my progress or the possibility of adverse effects?
- Will I require routine blood tests?
- What other approaches should I consider for better management of my spondylitis? For example:
 - Exercise
 - Physical therapy
 - Occupational therapy
 - Diet and nutrition
 - Weight control
 - Natural therapies
 - Support and other coping strategies

Understanding Your Health Plan and What It Covers

If you have health insurance, your health insurance policy is an agreement between you and your insurance company. The policy lists a package of medical benefits such as tests, drugs and treatment services. The insurance company agrees to cover the cost of certain benefits listed in your policy. These are called "covered services."

Managed care plans sign contracts with certain doctors and hospitals to care for their plan members. Your plan may refer to them as providers. This group of providers is often called the plan's *network*. Like you, they have agreed to follow the plan's rules.

Your doctor will try to be familiar with your insurance coverage so he or she can provide you with covered care, but there are so many different insurance plans that it's not always possible for your doctor to know the specific details of your plan. By understanding your insurance coverage, you can help your doctor recommend medical care that is covered in your plan.

- Read your insurance policy. It's better to know what your insurance company will pay for before you receive a service, get tested or fill a prescription. Some kinds of care may have to be approved by your insurance company before your doctor can provide them.

- If you still have questions about your coverage, call your insurance company and ask a representative to explain it.
- Remember that your insurance company, not your doctor, makes decisions about what will be paid for and what will not

Specialists

Rheumatologists are considered specialists. Many managed care plans won't pay for you to see a specialist unless your primary care physician (usually your family doctor) thinks it is necessary. If you see a specialist without a referral, you might have to pay more for the care you receive.

Other Services

If your doctor decides that you need to go to the hospital, have surgery or have certain tests, your insurance company may refuse to pay for it unless it can approve the treatment beforehand.

What You Should Know About Coverage for Medicines

Almost every managed care plan has a drug formulary. A formulary is a list of prescription medicines that your health plan has approved. If a drug isn't on the formulary, you'll probably have to pay more for it. Your insurance company can give you a list of drugs that are on the formulary. If necessary, show the list to your doctor when the doctor writes you a prescription. This list is reviewed and changed by the insurance company every few months, so be sure to check it often.

The drugs in a formulary are often listed in two or more groups, depending on how much of the cost you are expected to pay, referred to as your co-pay. A typical formulary might include the group of medications organized into different referred to as levels or tiers.

Brand Names vs. Generic Medicines

When a drug company develops a new drug, it gives it a brand name. Brand names are the names you usually see in ads on TV and in magazines--names like Advil or Rheumatrex.

For several years after the drug is developed, laws prevent other drug companies from copying it. When other companies start manufacturing and selling the drug, their versions are usually known by a different name -- the generic name. This is often the chemical name. For instance, the generic name of Advil is ibuprofen and the generic name for Rheumatrex is methotrexate.

Generic drugs are regulated by the FDA and are required to meet the same guidelines as their brand-name counterparts. Furthermore, generics must be the same in several respects: the active ingredients (those ingredients that are responsible for the drug's effects), the dosage amount, and the way in which it is taken. The differences between a brand-name drug and its

generic counterpart are in the coloring, shape, and name, which are protected for the original company even beyond the years of the original patent. There may be some differences among the inactive ingredients (i.e. the 'vehicle' for the drug) from one brand to another, so if a person has a negative reaction to a drug (brand name or generic), it may be worth talking with a health care provider and investigating a possible intolerance or allergy to one of the inactive ingredients, in addition to other possibilities.

When Recommended Health Care is Not Covered

Most of the things your doctor recommends will be covered by your plan, but some may not. When you have a test or treatment that isn't covered, or you get a prescription filled for a drug that isn't covered, your insurance company won't pay the bill. This is often called "denying the claim". You can still obtain the treatment your doctor recommended, but you will have to pay for it yourself.

Appealing a Health Plan Decision

If your insurance company denies your claim, you have the right to challenge the decision. Before you decide to appeal, know your insurance company's appeal process. This should be discussed in your health insurance plan handbook. Also, ask your doctor for his or her opinion. If your doctor thinks its right to make an appeal, he or she may be able to help you through the process.

Pre-existing Conditions and the Uninsured

A pre-existing condition is any condition—physical or mental—for which medical advice, diagnosis, care or treatment was recommended or received within a six-month period immediately preceding an individual's enrollment in a health plan. Certain conditions, such as pregnancy, cannot by law be considered a pre-existing medical condition. Nor can genetic information about an individual's likelihood of developing a disease or condition, unless a doctor diagnoses the disease or condition. Many health insurance providers consider spondylitis a pre-existing condition. Consumers should become completely familiar with policy definitions and provisions prior to purchasing an insurance policy.

How do people with pre-existing conditions obtain health insurance or how do they ensure that their health insurance coverage remains intact if they change jobs?

Some of the options include:

Group Health Plans: The best route for an individual with a pre-existing medical condition might be group health insurance. These plans are usually sponsored by an employer, union or professional association and cover at least two employees. However, many group health insurance plans, like other health insurance policies, have what are called pre-existing condition exclusion periods. This is the time (usually six months) during which a health plan will not pay for covered care related to a pre-existing condition. If, for example, an individual has AS when he starts a new job, his new employer-sponsored health plan could deny coverage for AS-related care for a specified

period of time. At the end of that period, however, the plan must cover the cost, minus co-pays and deductibles, of his AS care.

COBRA: If you were covered by health insurance at work but are about to lose your job, you're typically entitled to coverage for up to 18 months under the federal Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985. Unfortunately, you are required to pay the full cost of this coverage, which can be quite expensive.

High-deductible policies: If you are able to obtain health insurance, you'll pay more of your medical costs out of pocket, but these policies protect you against catastrophic medical bills. Having the coverage also entitles you to insurer-negotiated discounts with doctors and hospitals.

High-risk pools: If a pre-existing condition such as spondylitis is keeping you from obtaining insurance, check to see if your state has a high-risk insurance pool. Georgetown University's Health Policy Institute maintains a [list of state high-risk programs](#) and contact information.

Medicaid: This government-funded coverage is generally reserved for people with very low incomes and few assets; each state has different guidelines.

Medicare: This government-funded coverage is reserved for people age 65 or over, or for people under 65 with certain disabilities.

Other Resources

Centers for Disease Control

Provides information on [state health departments](#), which provide additional clinics and resources for the uninsured.

Cover the Uninsured

<http://covertheuninsured.org/>

Provides guides to health insurance coverage for each state.

Georgetown's Health Policy Institute

www.healthinsuranceinfo.net

Publishes consumer health insurance guides for most states. These guides provide detailed information about consumer rights and protections under federal and state laws.

Kaiser Family Foundation

www.kff.org

Provides health news and information service on the Web and a series of specialized websites, including state health care information.

Where to Go For Assistance with Medical and Prescription Costs

Managing the costs associated with healthcare of spondylitis can be stressful and, for many, a financial burden. Below is a list of assistance programs that can help with the cost of medications, co-pays and other healthcare needs.

Abbott Patient Assistance Program HUMIRA Protection Plan

www.abbottpatientassistancefoundation.org

1-800-222-6885, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Central Time

From the site: "The Abbott Patient Assistance Foundation provides free Abbott medicines, medical nutrition products, and diabetes care products to qualified patients who are experiencing financial difficulties and who generally do not have coverage available for these products through private insurance or government funded programs."

Centocor AccessOne Patient Assistance Program

www.centocoraccessone.com

Provides information about patient assistance programs for Remicade and Simponi.

Enliven Services

www.enlivenservices.com

From the site: "Enliven Services offers free information and assistance designed specifically for people who use ENBREL."

ENCourage Foundation

www.encouragefoundation.com

From the site: "The ENCourage Foundation was established to provide access to ENBREL[®] (etanercept) for certain patients who lack adequate resources to obtain ENBREL[®]."

HealthWell Foundation

(800) 675-8416

www.healthwellfoundation.org

From the site: "A nonprofit, charitable organization that helps individuals afford prescription medications they are taking for specific illnesses. The Foundation provides financial assistance to eligible patients to cover certain out-of-pocket healthcare costs, including: prescription drug coinsurance, co-payments, and deductibles, health insurance premiums, and other selected out-of-pocket healthcare costs."

Merck Helps

www.merck.com/merckhelps/

From the site: "At Merck, we believe that no one should go without the medicines or vaccines they need. That is why the Company provides its medicines and adult vaccines for free or at discounts to people who do not have prescription drug or health insurance coverage and who, without our assistance, cannot afford their Merck medicine and vaccines."

Needy Meds

www.needymeds.com

From the site: *"NeedyMeds is a source of information about assistance programs that help with the cost of medicine and other healthcare expenses."*

Patient Access Network Foundation

Toll Free (866) 316-PANF (7268)

www.patientaccessnetwork.org

From the site: *"The Patient Access Network Foundation is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to supporting the needs of patients that cannot access the treatments they need due to out-of-pocket healthcare costs."*

Partnership for Prescription Assistance

Toll Free (888) 4PPA-NOW (444-2669)

www.pparx.org

From the site: *"The Partnership for Prescription Assistance brings together America's pharmaceutical companies, doctors, other health care providers, patient advocacy organizations and community groups to help qualifying patients who lack prescription coverage get the medicines they need through the public or private program that's right for them."*

Patient Advocate Foundation Co-Pay Relief

A Patient Assistance Program

Toll Free (866) 512-3861

www.copays.org

From the site: *"Patient Advocate Foundation's Co-Pay Relief (CPR) Program provides direct co-payment assistance for pharmaceutical products to insured Americans who financially and medically qualify."*

Pfizer MAINTAIN (Medicines Assistance for Those who Are in Need)

Toll free (866) 706-2400

www.PfizerHelpfulAnswers.com

From the site: *"The Pfizer MAINTAIN Program provides free Pfizer medicines to qualified patients, delivered right to their home. This program can help eligible patients who have recently become unemployed and are currently uninsured continue receiving their Pfizer medicines."*

RxAssist Patient Assistance Program Center

www.rxassist.org

From the site: *"RxAssist is a website with information, news, and a database that are all designed to help you find out about ways to get affordable, or free, medications. The database includes information on the pharmaceutical companies' patient assistance programs, or programs that provide free medication to low-income patients. RxAssist was created by Volunteers in Health Care, a national, nonprofit resource center for healthcare programs working with the uninsured."*

RxHope

Toll Free (877) 979-4673

www.rxhope.com

From the site: *"You can apply here for Patient Assistance Programs offered by hundreds of manufacturers, as well as find information on programs offered by State and Federal government and by pharmaceutical companies."*

Rx Outreach

www.rxoutreach.com

From the site: *"Rx Outreach is a patient assistance program (PAP) for people of all ages. The program makes prescription medicines affordable for uninsured and under-insured individuals and families."*

Together RX Access

(800) 444-4106

www.togetherrxaccess.com

From the site: *"The Together Rx Access™ Card was created as a public service by a group of some of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies, in order to provide savings on prescriptions to eligible residents of the US and Puerto Rico who have no prescription drug coverage."*

STEP 4: Consider Getting Involved

You can become part of a supportive community and help make a difference through volunteering, being an advocate, participating in research, or by making a donation.

Opportunities to Get Involved

- **Educate others about spondylitis.** Send them to spondylitis.org where they'll find a host of information about AS and related diseases.
- **Distribute SAA's new Emergency First Responder training DVD to your community's Emergency Medical Personnel and Paramedics.** SAA developed a training DVD for emergency first responders to raise awareness about the special needs of spondylitis patients in emergency situations. Contact Melissa Velez Coelho, SAA's Director of Program Services, by email at melissa.velez@spondylitis.org for more information about how you can help distribute this important training program.
- **Sign up for a Local Health Fair.** SAA can provide educational materials that you can distribute at local Health Fairs. Contact Elin Aslanyan, SAA's Programs Coordinator by email at elin.aslanyan@spondylitis.org, and she can sign you up to become a Health Fair Volunteer.
- **Deliver SAA's Educational Brochures to your rheumatologist's office so they can be distributed to patients.** Contact Elin Aslanyan, SAA's Programs Coordinator by email at elin.aslanyan@spondylitis.org, to order brochures.
- **Support legislation that has a positive impact on the spondylitis community.** Send a message to your Representatives in Congress about important legislation that impacts all of us in the spondylitis community. Find tips about contacting Congress and sample messages here.
- **Help SAA make a splash in the social networking world.** Become a Fan on Facebook and share SAA's page with all your friends. Or, sign up to become a Friend of SAA on MySpace. SAA is also on Twitter -- find out what we are tweeting about!
- **Create your own video or Public Service Announcement about spondylitis.** Talk about how spondylitis affects your life. Send your videos to SAA and we'll post them on our Facebook and MySpace pages. For more information about video guidelines, please contact Chris Miller, SAA's Design & Web Coordinator at chris.miller@spondylitis.org.

- **Receive first hand support from someone else who has spondylitis.** Sign up to become a [Peer Mentee](#) or join a [Support Group](#) in your area.
- **Become a Research Participant.** Visit our [Research](#) section to find out how you can become involved.

Conclusion

If you, a family member or friend has been diagnosed with Ankylosing Spondylitis or a related disease, you have come to the right place. The Spondylitis Association of America is here to help you learn as much as you can about these conditions and to provide you with additional support and information.

We hope that this Action Plan has provided you with valuable tools to empower you to do the very best you can at managing your spondylitis for the best possible quality of life.