

# Spondyloarthropathy

## What is spondyloarthropathy?

Spondyloarthropathy (spon-di-lo-ar-throp-athy) is an inflammatory disease in children. It usually involves the joints in the lower part of your child's body, like the hips, knees and ankles. It can also affect the spine, pelvis, tendons, ligaments or bursas.

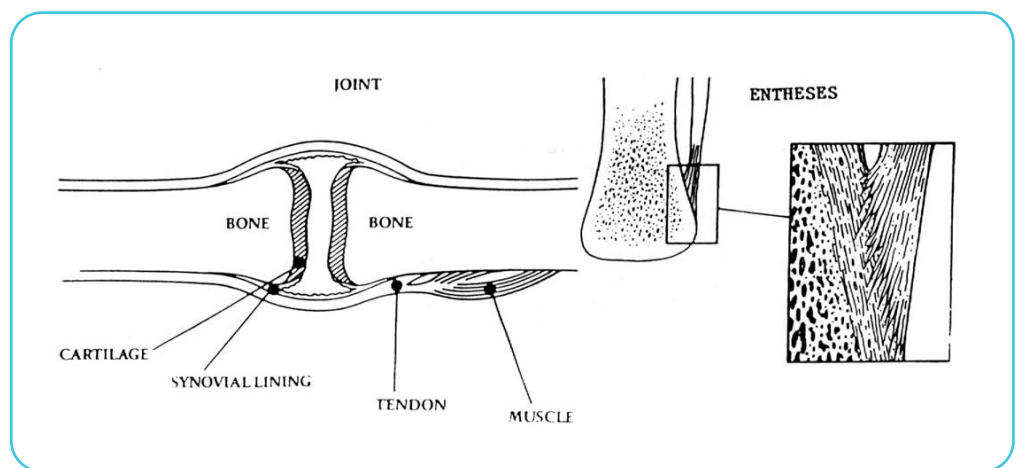
The signs of the disease may be present for a few weeks or months and then lessen or go away. It may flare up again later. This cycle of flare up and remission may repeat many times.

## What are the signs of the disease?

Often, the first sign of spondyloarthropathy is enthesitis. This is a painful inflammation where ligaments and tendons attach to bones. The pain is usually near a joint, but not in the joint. (See illustration). Common places for enthesitis are under the heel or toes, the back of the heel, around the knee or lower back.

Children with spondyloarthropathy may also have arthritis, which is inflammation of the joint itself. This inflammation often results in pain, stiffness and decreased movement. If the inflammation is not treated, it can cause lasting damage to the joint.

The joints in your child's spine can become inflamed, causing back pain and stiffness. The joint that attaches the lowest part of the back to the pelvic bones (sacroiliac joint) may be inflamed. This is called sacroiliitis. Children with spondyloarthropathy may also get fever, chronic skin rash (psoriasis), other rashes, inflammation of the intestines (colitis or Crohn's disease) and inflammation of the eye (conjunctivitis or iritis).



### To Learn More

- Rheumatology  
206-987-2057
- Ask your child's nurse or doctor
- [www.seattlechildrens.org](http://www.seattlechildrens.org)

### Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your child's nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.
- For Deaf and hard of hearing callers  
206-987-2280 (TTY)

### What is the cause of spondyloarthritis?

The cause of spondyloarthritis is not known. We do know that children who get a gene called HLA B27 from one or both parents are more likely to get the disease. But, many children with this gene do not get the disease. So, the gene itself does not cause it.

Also, not all children with spondyloarthritis have this gene. Family members of children with the disease sometimes have or develop some of the same problems. There is only about a five percent chance of a child or sibling of someone with spondyloarthritis getting the disease.

It is possible that the HLA B27 gene causes the body to react differently to common infections. Some children first show signs after they have had an infection. This is called Reactive Arthritis or Reiter's Syndrome.

Spondyloarthritis is not caused by stress, but the pain and discomfort may be stronger when your child is under a lot of stress.

### How is it treated?

Medicine and exercise are usually used to treat the disease. Medicines called nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) are prescribed to control the inflammation and prevent lasting joint damage. There are many different NSAIDs. It may take trial and error to find the best medicine for your child.

Cortisone shots into an inflamed joint can help in some children. Children with more inflammation may need stronger medicines than the NSAIDs.

Exercise and stretching is needed to keep joint range of motion and strengthen weak muscles. Physical and occupational therapists will help design a program for your child if needed.

### What else do we need to know?

Spondyloarthritis is a chronic condition — it can last for many years. There can be long periods free from symptoms and your child may seem cured. But, it can flare up again any time. This up and down pattern can cause stress for your child and family.

Children with the disease may see themselves as different from other children. They may feel alone if their activities need to be limited. They may feel uncomfortable if they are treated differently at school. Help is available if you, your child or your doctor feel that stress plays a big role. If physical education is a problem for your child, please talk about options with your Rheumatologist.

Even though spondyloarthritis is a chronic condition which may continue into adulthood, it is important to remember that with treatment, most children will be able to lead a full and productive life.