

## Physiotherapy department

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# Ankylosing spondylitis know-how (ASK)

You have been referred to the ankylosing spondylitis know-how (ASK) group at St Thomas' Hospital physiotherapy department.

Ankylosing spondylitis is a form of arthritis that affects parts of the spine, causing back pain and stiffness. The ASK group will show you the types of exercise which will help you to manage the symptoms of ankylosing spondylitis (AS), review your exercises and educate you about the benefits of maintaining an active lifestyle.

### What will I get out of this group?

The aim of the group is to:

- introduce the benefits of exercise in managing your symptoms
- provide advice and information on how to exercise
- provide resources to help you get started or progress your exercise habits
- answer any questions you may have about when and how much exercise is right for you.

It is well accepted that the benefits of exercise to individuals with AS can include the following:

- Increased flexibility
- Improved posture
- Improved sleep
- Reduction of pain and stiffness.

Using this evidence the class has been developed by physiotherapists, working with the rheumatology department at St Thomas' Hospital, to complement the medical management of your AS symptoms.

The class will include an introduction to water-based exercise (hydrotherapy) and land-based exercise, which you can do daily at your home or at a local pool and/or gym.

## Hydrotherapy

Hydrotherapy or aqua physiotherapy is exercise done in water. It has been reported to be particularly effective in reducing the pain of ankylosing spondylitis and improving movement. It involves exercising in warm water to help you relax, and is normally easier than exercising on land as the buoyancy of the water will support your body weight and reduce the strain of gravity, giving you greater freedom of movement.

This 30 minute class supervised by physiotherapists will introduce you to hydrotherapy using a series of specific exercises and provide you with the tools to continue the exercises on your own.

## Gym

A simple and varied home exercise program is the easiest way for you to exercise daily and gain maximum relief from your symptoms. The fitter and more flexible you are, the better you will be able to deal with stiffness and pain. This 30 minute gym class supervised by a physiotherapist will introduce you to a range of exercises and offer you advice about how you can vary the exercises to maximize the benefits for you personally.

## What to bring

- Loose comfortable clothing to wear in the gym.
- A swimming costume or swim shorts, and towel.
- Any fast acting medications you may currently take, for example asthma inhalers.

## Location, day and time of class

The class takes place in the physiotherapy department at **St Thomas' Hospital**.

**Physiotherapy department**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> Floor**  
**Lambeth Wing**  
**St Thomas' Hospital**  
**Westminster Bridge Road**  
**London SE1 7EH**

### **First Thursday of the month**

**10am-12pm** – The class lasts for approximately two hours.

### **Contact us**

If you have any questions or concerns about the ankylosing spondylitis know-how (ASK) group, please contact the physiotherapy department on **020 7188 5094 (Monday to Friday, 8.30am-5pm)**.

Out of hours, please contact your GP.

## Notes

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## Useful sources of information

**Pharmacy medicines helpline** – For information about any medicines that you have been prescribed at Guy's and St Thomas' hospitals, you can speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

**t:** 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

**Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)** – To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust's services, please contact PALS. Ask a member of staff to direct you to the PALS office or:

**t:** 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas' **t:** 020 7188 8803 at Guy's **e:** [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

**Knowledge & Information Centre (KIC)** – For more information about health conditions, support groups and local services, or to search the internet and send emails, please visit the KIC on the Ground Floor, North Wing, St Thomas' Hospital.

**t:** 020 7188 3416

**Patient Transport Service** – If you need to use our patient transport service, a member of our team needs to assess whether you are eligible. This involves a brief telephone interview and is completely confidential. Assessments must be carried out at least 48 hours before your appointment. If you think you may be eligible for this transport service, please contact the Patient Transport Assessment Team.

**t:** 020 7188 288

**Language support services** – If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch using the following contact details.

**t:** 020 7188 8815 **fax:** 020 7188 5953

**NHS Direct** – Offers health information and advice from specially trained nurses over the phone 24 hours a day.

**t:** 0845 4647 **w:** [www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)

**NHS Choices** – Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

**w:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)