Useful blood tests

There are no blood tests that by themselves are capable of definitively diagnosing or excluding axial Spondyloarthritis (SpA). However, when assessing a patient for axial SpA you should consider performing the following blood tests, if they have not already been performed as highlighted in the axial SpA ASAS (Assessment of SpondyloArthritis International Society) Classification Criteria.

Please note, these blood tests are in addition to and do not replace your local protocol guidelines for blood testing.

- **HLA-B27 (Human Leukocyte Antigen - B27)** - positive HLA-B27, according to standard lab techniques, is listed as a SpA feature in the ASAS axial SpA Classification Criteria¹
  - Positive HLA-B27 is a susceptibility gene for, and a prognostic feature, of SpA²,³
  - In the UK 8-9% of the population are HLA-B27 positive,³ while up to 95% of ankylosing spondylitis patients are HLA-B27 positive⁴,⁵
  - Studies have also shown that 57.9% of patients with IBP (inflammatory back pain) and HLA-B27 positivity are diagnosed with SpA⁶ and HLA-B27 shows a sensitivity of 66.1% and specificity of 79.9% for diagnosing axial SpA⁶

- **Tests for proteins (acute phase reactants) can be helpful but are not diagnostic tests. Useful tests include CRP (C-Reactive Protein) or ESR (Erythrocyte Sedimentation Rate)⁷** - elevated CRP (CRP concentration above normal limit in the presence of back pain) is one of the SpA features in the ASAS axial SpA Classification Criteria¹
  - CRP and ESR can be used as part of the Ankylosing Spondylitis Disease Activity Score (ASDAS) assessment. See the Review section for more information about ASDAS.

Please note:
Not all axial SpA patients will have positive HLA-B27 or an elevated CRP or ESR level. A patient can still have SpA if their HLA-B27 is negative and/or if their CRP or ESR is normal. CRP and ESR can also be used to calculate the ASDAS which can be used as part of the assessment and monitoring of axial SpA patients. More information on the ASDAS can be found here www.ASAS-group.org/clinical-instruments.php?id=01**

*There are other genetic tests/markers for SpA in use for research purposes but these are not in regular clinical use.
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