



**STAGES AND CATEGORIZATION OF AA**

□ **STAGE ONE - MILD**

A	Extremities: full range of motion, strength, extension
B	No urinary or central symptoms*
C	Normal ambulation
D	Intermittent pain: non-opioid management is sufficient

□ **STAGE TWO - MODERATE**

A	Extremities: full range of motion, strength, extension
B	Some urinary, gastrointestinal tract, and/or central symptoms*
C	Normal ambulation
D	Constant pain, but manageable without opioids

□ **STAGE THREE - SEVERE**

A	Extremities: some deficiency in range of motion, strength, extension
B	Significant urinary, gastrointestinal tract, and/or central symptoms*
C	Ambulates with assistance
D	Severe, constant pain that requires daily opioids

□ **STAGE FOUR - CATASTROPHIC**

A	Extremities: significant deficiencies in range of motion, strength, or extension
B	Significant urinary, gastrointestinal tract, or central symptoms*
C	Bed bound part of each day
D	Ambulation requires assistance
E	Severe, intractable pain that requires palliative care

Notes on Interpretation

- ✓ Central refers to headaches, eye/ear/nasal symptoms such as blurred vision, tinnitus, vertigo, or nasal dripping
- ✓ Ambulation assistance means cane, walker, wheelchair
- ✓ MRI findings do not necessarily correlate with staging although the severe and catastrophic categories usually show one or more of these findings: dense scarring of nerve root clumps, multiple clumps, lower spinal canal distension (“empty sac”), peripheralization of nerve roots, calcification.

Note: Categories can overlap. Mild and moderate categories have the best potential for recovery which is motivation to diagnose AA and begin treatment as early as possible.