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The relationship between lifestyle factors and outcome of treatment with TNF α inhibitors in axial spondyloarthritis – results from 14 European countries

This study looked at whether lifestyle factors affect how well patients with axial spondyloarthritis respond to their first tumour necrosis factor inhibitor (TNFi), a commonly used biologic treatment. Using data from 14 European rheumatology registries, the researchers included 14,885 patients. They found that current smoking and higher body weight were linked to poorer treatment response. After 12 months, smokers were about 20–25% less likely to respond to TNFi treatment, while overweight and obese patients had substantially lower odds of improvement, with obesity showing the strongest negative effect – patients with a BMI >30kg/m² were approximately half as likely to respond to treatment, compared to those with a BMI <25kg/m². Alcohol use appeared to be associated with better treatment response, but the authors caution that this finding is uncertain and unlikely to be causal.

These findings are important because they suggest that lifestyle factors may influence treatment success. For rheumatologists, asking about smoking and weight at treatment start could help identify patients needing extra support. For patients, smoking cessation and weight management may improve overall health and potentially increase the chance of treatment benefit.

Link to the publication: The relationship between lifestyle factors and outcome of treatment with TNF α inhibitors in axial spondyloarthritis – results from 14 European countries at <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41927-025-00529-4>