

WHAT IS LUPUS?

Systemic Lupus is an autoimmune disease where the body's immune system becomes hyperactive and attacks normal healthy tissue. This results in symptoms such as

inflammation, swelling and damage to joints, skin, kidneys, blood, the heart and lungs.

Under normal function, the immune system makes proteins called antibodies in order to protect and fight against viruses and bacteria (antigens). Lupus thus makes the immune system unable to differentiate between antigens and healthy tissue. This leads the immune system to direct antibodies against the healthy tissue, causing swelling, pain and tissue damage.

Is there a single

TEST FOR SYSTEMIC LUPUS?

No, there is not a single diagnostic test for systemic lupus. A variety of laboratory tests are used to detect physical changes or conditions in your body that can occur with lupus. Each test result adds more information to the picture your doctor is forming of your illness.

WHO GETS LUPUS?

Anyone can get lupus, but it most often affects women. Lupus is also more common in women of African American, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American descent than in Caucasian (white) women. Men can also get lupus though it is not common.

What's THE CAUSE FOR LUPUS ?

The cause of lupus is not known. Research suggests that genes play an important role, but genes alone do not determine who gets lupus.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS of Lupus?

Symptoms vary, but some of the most common symptoms of lupus are:

- Pain or swelling in joints
- Muscle pain
- Fever with no known cause
- Red rashes, most often on the face
- Chest pain when taking a deep breath
- Hair loss
- Pale or purple fingers or toes
- Sensitivity to the sun
- Swelling in legs or around eyes
- Mouth ulcers
- Swollen glands
- Feeling very tired.

Less common symptoms include:

- Anemia (a decrease in red blood cells)
- Headaches
- Dizzy spells
- Feeling sad
- Confusion
- Seizures

Symptoms may come and go. The times when a person is having symptoms are called flares, which can range from mild to severe. New symptoms may appear at any time.

HOW IS LUPUS DIAGNOSED ?

There is no single test to diagnose lupus. It may take months or years for a doctor to diagnose lupus

Your doctor may use many tools to make a diagnosis:

- Medical history
- Complete examination
- Blood tests
- Skin biopsy (looking at skin samples under a microscope)
- Kidney biopsy (looking at tissue from your kidney under a microscope).



How is LUPUS TREATED?

You may need specialist health care teams to treat the many symptoms of Lupus.

These include:

- A family doctor
- Rheumatologists—doctors who treat arthritis and other diseases that cause swelling in the joints
- Clinical immunologists—doctors who treat immune system disorders
- Nephrologists—doctors who treat kidney disease
- Haematologists—doctors who treat blood disorders
- Dermatologists—doctors who treat skin diseases
- Neurologists—doctors who treat problems with the nervous system
- Cardiologists—doctors who treat heart and blood vessel problems
- Endocrinologists—doctors who treat problems related to the glands and hormones
- Nurses
- Psychologists

Your health care team or doctor will develop a treatment plan to fit your needs. You and your doctor should review the plan often to be sure it is working. You should report new symptoms to your doctor right away so that treatment can be changed if needed.

WHAT CAN I DO?

It is vital that you take an active role in your treatment. One key to living with lupus is to know about the disease and its impact. Being able to spot the warning signs of a flare can

help you prevent the flare or make the symptoms less severe. Many people with lupus have certain symptoms just before a flare, such as:

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------|
| • Feeling more tired | Stomach ache |
| • Pain | Headache |
| • Rash | Dizziness |
| • Fever | |

You should see your doctor often, even when symptoms are not severe. These visits will help you and your doctor to:

- Look for changes in symptoms
- Predict and prevent flares
- Change the treatment plan as needed
- Detect side effects of treatment.

PREGNANCY AND/OR CONTRACEPTION FOR WOMEN WITH LUPUS

Women with lupus can and do have healthy babies. There are a few things to keep in mind if you are pregnant or thinking about becoming pregnant:

- Pregnancy in women with lupus is considered high risk, but most pregnant women with lupus carry their babies safely.
- Pregnant women with lupus should see their doctors often.
- Lupus can flare during pregnancy.
- Pregnancy counselling and planning before pregnancy are important.

Women with lupus who do not wish to become pregnant or who are taking medicine that could be harmful to an unborn baby may want reliable birth control. Recent studies have shown that oral contraceptives (birth control pills) are safe for women with lupus.

Diets

There is no special diet for lupus, despite the numerous claims on the Internet and in various books and other publications. In general, you should try to eat a nutritious, well-balanced, and varied diet that contains plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, moderate amounts of meats, poultry, and oily fish, as fish oil has been found to help reduce inflammation.

If you plan to add herbs, dietary supplements, or vitamins to your diet you should first discuss your decision with your lupus doctor. This is especially important as herbs or supplements may interact with medicines used to treat lupus. Herbs or supplements should never be used to replace medicines prescribed to control symptoms of lupus or medication side effects. never be used to replace medicines prescribed to control symptoms of lupus or medication side effects.

FAQs

1

How did I get lupus?

The cause of lupus remains unknown. It is believed that lupus has a genetic predisposition and that environmental factors could trigger the onset of the disease.

2

Is it contagious or sexually transmitted?

Lupus is not contagious. It cannot be transmitted sexually.

3

Is lupus a woman's disease? Do men and children get lupus? Yes, lupus is mainly a woman's disease, although men can have lupus. The ratio of women to men is 9 to 1, or 90%. Before puberty, boys and girls have the same ratio; that is 1 to 1.

4

Is Lupus more prevalent among some group of people? Yes, Lupus primarily affects young women and the disease often starts between the ages of 15 and 44. People of all ethnicities may get Lupus, however, it is more prevalent among Black, Llatino and Asian women than in white or Caucasian women.

5

Can I have children if I have lupus? Yes. Successful pregnancy and childbirth are possible in this modern age. It is however, wise for lupus patients to be in the care of a health professional/doctor.

6

How long can I live with lupus? Most people with lupus can live a normal life span if they are properly treated. Lupus patients can lead a healthy lifestyle if they follow their doctors' advice.

7

Is lupus a progressive disease? Not necessarily. With proper treatment, lupus is usually manageable.

8

Is lupus hereditary? No as 90% of lupus patients DO NOT have relatives with lupus. It is believed environmental factors may also play a role.

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*Together we shall find
a cure*

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