

Lupus Awareness

Researchers are still unsure of what causes lupus. Although no cures have been discovered yet, lupus can be managed through medications and proper rest.
- National Institute of Arthritis, Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases

What is Lupus?

Lupus is a disease which affects the body's immune system. The immune system normally protects the body against diseases by attacking germs and viruses. With lupus, the immune system goes out of control and starts attacking healthy tissue. Lupus affects everyone differently and its onset is often hard to pinpoint, which has made it difficult for researchers to estimate the amount of people in the United States who have the disease. One person with lupus may have rashes, while another person may have swollen knees and a fever.

Types of Lupus

The most common form of lupus can involve many parts of the body, including the heart,

lungs, kidneys and brain. Symptoms can vary from mild to serious. Drug-induced lupus is similar to the most common form of lupus but with milder symptoms. Drug-induced lupus is caused by certain heart medications and usually goes away once the medicine has ended. A third type of lupus mainly affects the skin and can cause a red rash to appear or can lead to discoloration on the skin.

Signs and Symptoms

Lupus can be difficult to diagnose, and it is often mistaken for other diseases. Symptoms of lupus tend to vary from person to person with some people only having a few signs, while others have more. However, some common signs include:

- A red rash or change of color on the face, often in the shape of a butterfly across the nose and cheeks
- Swollen or painful joints
- Unexplained fever
- Chest pains with deep breathing
- Swollen glands



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- Feeling tired all of the time
- Unusual hair loss
- Pale or purple fingers or toes from the cold or stress
- Sensitivity to the sun
- Depression, trouble thinking and/or memory problems

When symptoms of lupus appear, they are called “flares.” These flares tend to come and go, but may appear after being out in the sun or after a hard day of work.

How to Prevent Flares

People with lupus who take their medicine on a regular basis might still find that there are times when their symptoms appear worse. Recognizing that a flare is coming can help them to take the necessary steps to cope with it. Many people will feel very tired or have pains, a rash, fever or stomach discomfort just before a flare takes place. Taking steps to prevent flares, like limiting the amount of time spent in the sun or getting enough rest and quiet, can be very helpful. People can also take steps to prevent flares by



developing coping skills to limit stress and exercising moderately when possible.

Who gets Lupus?

Nine out of 10 people with Lupus are women. African-American women are three times more likely to get lupus than Caucasian women.

Causes of Lupus

Researchers are unsure of what causes lupus, but it is not caught from another person nor is it related to cancer or AIDS. Although no cures have been discovered, lupus can be managed through medications and proper rest. Lupus is most common in women between the ages of 15 and 44, which is also roughly the ages that women can have babies. Scientists believe that a woman’s hormones might have something to do with the cause of the disease. Lupus also appears to run in families, which suggests that the disease might be hereditary. Certain factors, such as environment, sunlight, stress and certain medications, can trigger symptoms in some people. However, these factors may not trigger symptoms in other people who have similar genetic backgrounds. Researchers are still trying to determine why some people get lupus and others do not.

How Do You Find Out if You Have Lupus?

- **Medical History** - Telling your doctor about any symptoms or other health problems that you may have had can help him understand your situation. Your medical history can provide him with helpful clues to help him understand your condition.

- **Physical Exam** - The doctor will perform a complete physical exam and look for rashes and other signs that something is wrong.
- **Testing of Blood and Urine Samples** - Blood and urine samples often indicate whether your immune system is overactive.
- **Skin or Kidney Biopsy** - In a biopsy, tissue is removed by a minor surgical procedure and examined under a microscope. The tissue from the skin or kidneys can show signs of an autoimmune disease.

Please consult your physician if you have any of the symptoms of lupus and believe that you might be suffering from this disease.

For more information about lupus, visit the National Institute of Arthritis, Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases at:

www.niams.nih.gov.

For more information about Nationwide Better Health visit:

www.nwbetterhealth.com

Or contact your benefits representative.



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