



Lupus & Pregnancy

If you have lupus and you're planning to get pregnant, work with your doctor to plan a healthy pregnancy.

Before You Get Pregnant

Lupus increases your risk for certain complications during pregnancy, so it's important to take steps to protect your health and the health of your baby.

Wait until your lupus isn't active and all your symptoms are under control to start trying to get pregnant. Experts recommend waiting at least 6 months after you last had lupus symptoms to start trying.

It's a good idea to meet with your doctor about a year before you start trying to get pregnant. Together, you can make a plan to reduce your risk of problems during pregnancy.

Can I keep taking my lupus medicines?

Some lupus medicines can cause serious birth defects. It's also important to know that some lupus medicines can stay in your body for several months, so you may need to stop or switch treatments up to 3 months before you start trying to get pregnant.

Before you start trying to get pregnant, ask your doctor which treatment options are safe for you.

During Pregnancy

A special doctor called a maternal-fetal medicine specialist can work with your regular doctors to help you stay healthy during pregnancy.

Make sure you understand how often you need to see the doctor during your pregnancy — and never skip a visit. These appointments are very important because the doctor can test your blood and urine (pee) to check for signs of problems with your pregnancy. These tests help find problems early, when they may be easier to treat.

Plan to give birth in a hospital that has a neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). A NICU can take better care of your baby if there are any complications.

Help Us Solve
The Cruel Mystery
LUPUSTM
FOUNDATION OF AMERICA



Can I breastfeed my baby?

Breastfeeding is healthy for you and your baby. Some lupus medicines can pass into breastmilk, so it's important to ask your doctor which medicines are safe to take while breastfeeding.

Will my baby be born with lupus?

No — but some babies born to mothers with lupus get a condition called **neonatal lupus**. Neonatal lupus is not the same type of lupus adults get, and it doesn't mean that these babies will get lupus as adults.

The most common symptom of neonatal lupus is a rash on the baby's face. The rash usually goes away within 6 months after birth. Rarely, babies with neonatal lupus get a condition called congenital heart block. Babies with congenital heart block may need a pacemaker to control their heartbeat.

Your doctor will test your blood to see if your baby is at risk for neonatal lupus. You may also need a test called an ultrasound to check for problems with the baby's heart.

Am I at risk for pregnancy complications?

Many people with lupus have healthy pregnancies. But lupus does increase your risk for several serious complications, including:

- **Blood clots**
- **Kidney problems**
- **High blood pressure**
- **Growth problems** (when the baby grows too slowly in the womb)
- **Premature birth** (when the baby is born too early)
- **Miscarriage** (loss of a pregnancy before 20 weeks of pregnancy)
- **Stillbirth** (loss of a pregnancy after 20 weeks of pregnancy)

Some people with lupus have **antiphospholipid antibodies** — certain proteins in blood that can increase the risk of blood clots and miscarriage. If your blood tests show that you have these antibodies, your doctor may give you medicine to help prevent blood clots during pregnancy.

Lupus also increases your risk for **preeclampsia** and **HELLP syndrome** — 2 serious conditions that can happen during pregnancy. Get help right away if you have any of these symptoms while you're pregnant:

- Blurry vision or sudden changes in your vision
- Severe headaches
- Severe pain in your upper abdomen (usually under the right side of the ribcage)
- Trouble breathing or severe shortness of breath

Taking low-dose aspirin (also called baby aspirin) every day may help lower your risk for preeclampsia. Talk with your doctor about taking low-dose aspirin during pregnancy.

What if I have lupus symptoms during pregnancy?

Tell your doctors right away if your lupus symptoms return or get worse while you're pregnant. That way, your doctors can treat your symptoms with medicines that won't harm your baby.

After Pregnancy

Some women develop preeclampsia or HELLP syndrome after they give birth. It's rare for women to develop these problems after leaving the hospital — but if you have symptoms of these conditions after you give birth, get help right away.

Schedule a follow-up visit with your rheumatologist 2 to 3 months after your baby is born. Your doctor can check on your lupus symptoms and may tell you to start taking medicines again that you had to stop during pregnancy.

NATIONAL

**Resource Center
on Lupus** ■

by **Lupus Foundation of America**

For more information about lupus, please visit the
National Resource Center on Lupus at:

[Lupus.org/Resources](https://lupus.org/Resources)

©2019 LUPUS FOUNDATION OF AMERICA, INC.