

# Could You Have Lupus?

Lupus is a chronic autoimmune disease that causes inflammation in various parts of the body. The disease can range from mild to life-threatening. Ninety percent of those diagnosed with lupus are females between ages 15 and 44, but lupus also occurs in men, older people, and children. Lupus can be very hard to diagnose because symptoms vary from person to person, can come and go, and can mimic symptoms of other illnesses. **It is important to know the symptoms of lupus and to know if you are at risk for this disease. Here is a simple test to help you. Read each question and answer it in terms of your current AND past health.**

## Brain and Nervous System

Have you had a seizure or convulsion?

Have you had unexplained confusion that lasted more than an hour?

Have you had unexplained fever higher than 100° F/38° C for more than a few days that was not due to infection?

## Heart and Lungs

Have you felt chest pain while taking deep breaths?

Have you had a stroke or heart attack?

## Kidneys

Have you been told you have protein in your urine?

Have you had swelling in your legs and ankles on both sides at the same time?

## Blood and Circulatory System

Have you been told you have anemia, low white cell count, or low platelet count?

Have your fingers and/or toes become pale or red or blue, or felt numb or painful?

Have you had blood clotting problems or a miscarriage?

## Eyes, Nose, and Mouth

Have you had sores in your mouth or nose that lasted more than five days?

Have you developed irritation or dryness in your eyes or mouth for more than a few weeks?

## Stomach and Intestines

Have you had unexplained weight loss or abdominal pain or tenderness when your belly is touched?

## Muscles and Joints

Have you had stiff, tender, and swollen joints that feel worse in the morning?

Have you had extreme fatigue and weakness for days or weeks at a time, even after plenty of sleep?

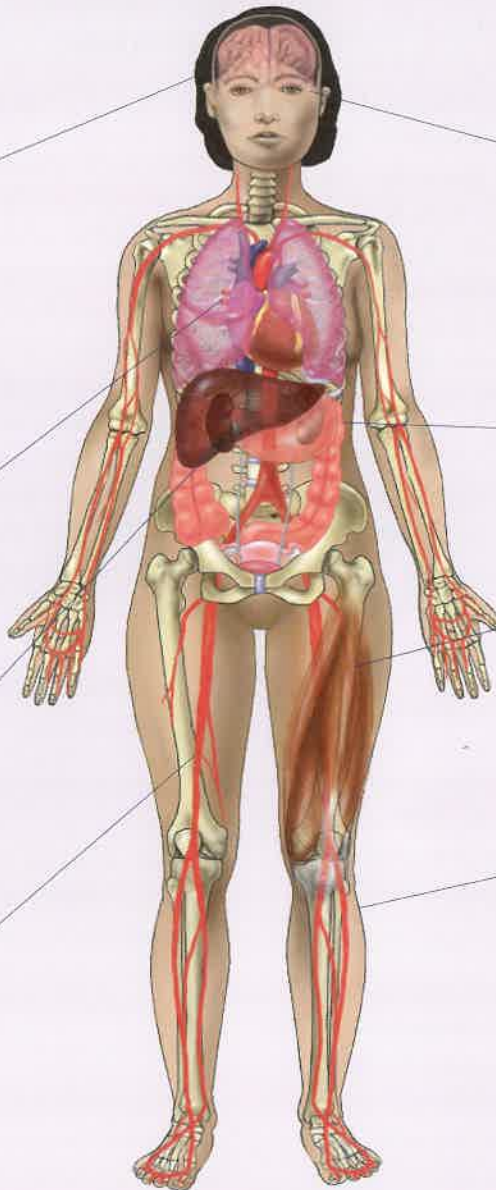
## Skin

Has your skin broken out after being in the sun, but it's not a sunburn?

Have you had redness or rash across your nose and cheeks in the shape of a butterfly?

Have you had sores on your skin that would not heal?

Have you had sudden, unexplained hair loss?



If you have had any symptoms like these, especially if you have had several, talk to your doctor about lupus. Early diagnosis and proper medical care are the best ways to manage lupus.

Please turn over this page for more information.

Help Us Solve  
The Cruel Mystery  
**LUPUS**<sup>™</sup>  
FOUNDATION OF AMERICA

# Facts About Lupus

## TYPES OF LUPUS

- **Systemic lupus erythematosus** causes inflammation in various parts of the body, most commonly the joints, kidneys, skin, brain, heart, lungs, and blood vessels. Sometimes few, if any, symptoms are evident (remission), and other times the disease is active (flare). Systemic lupus is the most common form of lupus, and is what most people mean when they refer to “lupus.” Systemic lupus can be mild or severe.
- **Cutaneous lupus erythematosus** is limited to the skin. Although cutaneous lupus can cause many types of rashes and lesions (sores), the most common rash is raised, scaly and red, but not itchy; it is called a discoid rash because the areas of rash are shaped like disks, or circles. Sometimes the lesions will heal with no scarring, other times there can be permanent scarring. Another common example of cutaneous lupus is a rash over the cheeks and across the bridge of the nose, known as the malar, or “butterfly” rash. Hair loss and changes in the pigment, or color, of the skin are also symptoms of cutaneous lupus. Approximately 10% of people with cutaneous lupus will develop systemic lupus.
- **Antiphospholipid syndrome** leads to a blood clotting disorder. Like cutaneous lupus, this condition can be seen in people with systemic lupus or it can exist on its own. This syndrome can lead to strokes, heart attacks, and miscarriages, as well as other blood clotting disorders.
- **Drug-induced lupus** is a lupus-like disease caused by certain prescription drugs. The drugs most commonly connected with drug-induced lupus are hydralazine (used to treat high blood pressure or hypertension), procainamide (used to treat irregular heart rhythms), and isoniazid (used to treat tuberculosis). The lupus-like symptoms usually disappear within six months after the drug is stopped.
- **Neonatal lupus** is a rare condition that can affect infants of women who have lupus. At birth, the infant may have a skin rash, liver problems, or low blood cell counts, but these symptoms usually disappear after several months with no lasting effects. A very small percentage of infants with neonatal lupus may also have a serious heart defect; however, most infants of mothers with lupus are entirely healthy.

## CAUSES OF LUPUS

The causes of lupus are not known, but scientists believe that genetics (heredity), hormones, and environmental factors all play a role. Environmental factors that can trigger lupus or a lupus flare include: ultraviolet rays from the sun or from artificial light (which can activate inflammatory cells in the skin); certain drugs (sulfas, tetracyclines, penicillin and other antibiotics); and anything that causes stress to the body (infection, surgery, an accident, a cold or a viral illness, being pregnant, or giving birth).

## DIAGNOSIS OF LUPUS

Symptoms of lupus can vary and can come and go, so treatment is based on specific findings on each person. If you think you have lupus, see your doctor. There is no one test for lupus, so your doctor will need to take samples of your blood for a variety of tests. Your family health history and your own health history are also important parts of a lupus diagnosis. Be sure your doctor knows your answers to the questions on the other side of this sheet. If your doctor strongly suspects lupus, it is important for you to be referred to a specialist who has experience with this disease, such as a rheumatologist (for joint and muscle problems) or a dermatologist (for skin problems). Early diagnosis is very important in preventing damage to vital organs.

## LIFE WITH LUPUS

Living well with lupus means balancing your activities with rest, and trying to avoid stress. You will want to learn to:

- Listen to your body, but don't give up your goals and dreams.
- Get extra rest, but also get regular exercise when possible.
- Accept help from others, but do something proactive every day.
- Question your doctors, but don't ignore their advice.
- Follow instructions carefully when taking medications.
- Closely monitor your condition with your doctor.

Although there is no cure for lupus, early diagnosis and proper medical treatment can significantly help to manage the disease. Increasing numbers of research studies are underway, to develop new and improved treatments for lupus, and to find a cure.

*The Lupus Foundation of America is the only national force devoted to solving the mystery of lupus, one of the world's cruelest, most unpredictable, and devastating diseases, while giving caring support to those who suffer from its brutal impact. Through a comprehensive program of research, education, and advocacy, we lead the fight to improve the quality of life for all people affected by lupus. Contact the LFA or a chapter that serves your area to find out how you can become involved in our mission and how we can help you.*

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