

What Teachers Should Know about Lupus

As an educator, there's a lot you need to know beyond the subjects you teach and how to run a classroom. This includes knowing how a chronic illness, like lupus, can affect a student. Students with lupus may need care and assistance at school, so someone on the staff should understand the disease. Once you know more about lupus, that person can be you.

Here are 15 things educators should know about lupus and school:

1 | **Lupus is a chronic disease that can affect any organ in the body.**

Lupus can cause inflammation (swelling) and pain in any part of the body. It's an autoimmune disease, meaning that the immune system attacks healthy tissue (tissue is what organs are made of). Lupus commonly affects the skin, joints, kidneys, brain, and lungs — but other parts of the body can be affected too.

2 | **Lupus isn't contagious.**

Students can't catch lupus or give it to someone.

3 | **Lupus symptoms can show up in many different ways.**

Lupus can cause a lot of different symptoms that may come and go and change over time. Get to know your students and their symptoms. Talk to their parents or caregivers to learn more about what to watch for.

4 | **Lupus affects each person differently.**

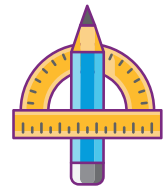
For some, lupus can be mild. For others, it can be life-threatening. Some students' symptoms may not be visible to you. But remember that even though some students with lupus look healthy, they may not feel that way.

5 | **It takes a lot of work and a team effort to manage lupus.**

Children with lupus and their families work very hard and collaboratively with their health care teams to keep lupus symptoms under control. A similar team effort is needed at school.

6 | **Students with lupus may have to leave class to see the school nurse for care.**

Students may have formal plans in place that describe what school staff shall do to address their health care needs. They may need to see the nurse during the day for care. If there's no plan or nurse available, make sure you know who is designated to provide care to the student and how to reach their parents or caregivers.



7 | Children with lupus want to be treated like everyone else.

To fit in, some children may hide aspects of their disease from classmates, teachers, and friends. It's important for the school staff to help students manage their lupus and still feel included.

8 | Students with lupus may require assistance to succeed in school.

Your student may have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or a 504 plan. You should understand what's in the plan and your responsibilities. If a student doesn't have a plan, but you think one might be needed, talk to the appropriate school district personnel.

9 | Children with lupus may be absent from school.

Students with lupus may miss days of school for medical reasons. If your student has an IEP or 504 plan, it may require the student to have extra time to complete assignments, extended deadlines, copies of a classmate's notes, or a tutor to keep up with lessons and assignments.

10 | Children with lupus must take precautions to avoid exposure to germs.

Children with lupus are at increased risk for infections from germs, like viruses and bacteria. Encourage students with lupus to wash their hands frequently during the day, sanitize shared classroom equipment, and avoid sitting near sick classmates.

11 | Pain in joints and muscles caused by lupus can limit a child's physical abilities.

Adjustments may be required for students with lupus — for example, extra breaks during the day or permission to use the school elevator.

12 | Lupus can affect the brain, causing changes in concentration and memory.

Children with lupus may have trouble concentrating and remembering things. If your student has an IEP or 504 plan, it may require the student to have more time to complete exams, standardized tests, and assignments.

13 | Ultraviolet (UV) light can trigger lupus symptoms.

Encourage students with lupus to practice sun safety daily by using sunscreen and sun-protective clothing. When possible, schedule outdoor activities in the morning or later in the afternoon. Light shields on fluorescent lights can also offer UV protection.

14 | Lupus can cause extreme tiredness.

Children with lupus may often feel very tired or become easily fatigued, no matter how much they sleep. If a child with lupus appears tired, a short rest period or break may be required.

15 | Certain medicines for lupus may change how a child looks and behaves.

Medicine side effects can include swollen face and neck, weight gain, thinning hair, and acne — as well as irritability, anxiety, and mood changes.

For more information on lupus and school, please visit the National Resource Center on Lupus at: Resources.Lupus.org/Collections/Lupus-and-School

