

Treatment of Lupus

While there is no cure yet, with treatment, most people with lupus can look forward to a normal life expectancy. There are many medication that can control symptoms. The treatment plan will depend in part on the type and severity of symptoms.

Living Well With Lupus

One thing that makes a huge difference in living with lupus is the person's role in controlling the disease. We can deal better with the challenge of living with this condition by learning all we can about it and by being aware of how our own body reacts.

Sometimes, flares follow a clear pattern, with the same combination of symptoms every time. An informed person can watch for warning signs and alert their doctor early on. While false alarms happen, catching a flare in its early stages can make treatment easier and more effective.

With this information as a basis, a good working relationship with your doctor is crucial to the success of your treatment. The strong support of family and friends can be equally important.

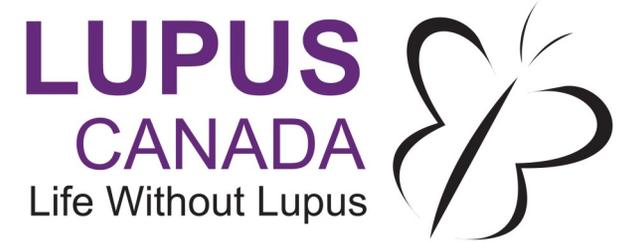


Our Mission

Lupus Canada is a national voluntary organization dedicated to improving the lives of people affected by lupus through research, public awareness, advocacy and education.

Our Vision

Life without lupus



An Introductory Guide to Lupus

To learn more about lupus symptoms, diagnosis, treatment, management, and coping with this chronic disease, contact Lupus Canada by email at info@lupuscanada.org or call us at 1-800-661-1468.

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Working together to conquer lupus

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What is Lupus?

Lupus is a chronic disease characterized by inflammation in one or more parts of the body. It belongs in the family of autoimmune diseases which includes rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis, juvenile diabetes, and scleroderma. The most common type of lupus is Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE).

Systemic lupus is a complex, and sometimes baffling, condition that can target any tissue or organ in the body. This includes the skin, muscles, joints, blood vessels, lungs, heart, kidneys, and the brain.

There are other types of lupus which mainly affect the skin. A few individuals develop drug induced lupus as a response to some medications used to treat other conditions. These symptoms disappear once the person stops taking the medication.

Who Gets Lupus?

Anyone can get lupus: women, men, and children. Between the ages of 15 and 45, 9x more women than men are diagnosed with lupus. In those under 15 or over 45, both sexes are affected equally.

Causes of Lupus

The cause remains unknown. What we do know is that, in lupus, the immune system (the body's defense against viruses and bacteria) is unable to tell the difference between intruders and the body's own tissues. This can result in the immune system targeting parts of the body, causing inflammation and creating the symptoms of lupus.

Because it occurs most often in women of child-bearing age, there may be a link between lupus and hormones, but how this works remains uncertain. Genetic factors may make certain people more likely to develop lupus, but these factors are not fully known yet.

Until science fully understands how the immune system works, the specific cause of lupus remains unknown.

Important things to note:

While lupus can be a serious condition, in most cases it can be treated and controlled;

Lupus often goes in cycles, with periods of time in which symptoms may disappear completely;

Diagnosis and treatment are improving, allowing people with lupus lead increasingly active and productive lives

Symptoms of Lupus

General statements about symptoms of lupus can be helpful, but each person's experience will be very different.

Some people will have only a few of the many possible symptoms. Because it can target any of the body's tissues, lupus is often hard to pin down or diagnose. That's why it is called "the disease with 1000 faces".

Before symptoms specific to lupus occur, flu-like symptoms may appear, along with severe fatigue, a sudden unexplained loss or gain in weight, headaches, hair loss, hives, high blood pressure, or changes in the colour of fingers in the cold.

Any of the following may indicate that lupus is present. A person with lupus may experience:

- Joint pain, sometimes with swelling, redness and heat
- A red rash across upper cheeks and bridge of nose
- Extreme fatigue
- An unusual reaction to sunlight
- A red, scaly rash
- Small, usually painless sores inside the nose or mouth
- Chest pain, worse when lying down or inhaling
- Swelling of feet and legs, weight gain
- Seizures or severe psychological symptoms
- Abnormalities in blood chemistry which show up in blood tests

This far from a complete list of symptoms, and the diagnosis of lupus must be made by a doctor.

What to Expect with Lupus

As a chronic illness, lupus is different for each individual. It often appears in cycles, which can consist of:

- A lupus "flare", with severe acute symptoms needing medical attention;
- A "chronic phase", when symptoms may continue but are less severe;
- A "remission", when symptoms may disappear completely for long period, though they can return.

In the chronic phase, and especially in the remission phase (when it's easy to forget to take care), it is important for people to practice good health and lifestyle habits that will help maintain their well-being. Lupus is a serious condition, but diagnosis and treatment are improving.