

# THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT LUPUS

In the Clinic  
Annals of Internal Medicine

## What is lupus?

- A chronic disease that occurs when the body's defense system (the immune system) wrongly attacks its own tissues.
- The result can be pain and swelling (inflammation) that affects the skin, joints, kidneys, and other organs.
- Symptoms range from mild to serious and fluctuate between times when the disease is active (a flare) and times when it is quiet (remission).
- The cause is unclear.
- Lupus usually starts when people are in their 20s and 30s and is 10 times more common in women than in men.

## What are the signs and symptoms?

- Fatigue.
- Rashes (particularly a butterfly-shaped rash over the cheeks or a red rash with raised round or oval patches).
- Painful and swollen joints.
- Sores in the mouth or nose.
- Chest pain when breathing deeply, from swelling of the tissue lining the lungs (pleurisy or pleuritis) or the heart (pericarditis).
- Mental health problems, seizures, or strokes.
- Fever.
- Kidney problems, liver disease, clogged arteries (atherosclerosis).

## How is it diagnosed?

- Your doctor will examine you carefully and ask you about your symptoms.
- Your doctor may order blood tests that can help confirm whether you have the disease.

## How is it treated?

- Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs to decrease swelling, pain, and fever.



- Antimalarial drugs (such as hydroxychloroquine) to reduce fatigue, rashes, joint pain, and mouth sores.
- Corticosteroids or biologics, a new type of drug for rheumatic diseases, to reduce inflammation.
- Treatment is based on the symptoms and the severity of the disease.

## For More Information

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[www.niams.nih.gov/Health\\_Info/Lupus/default.asp](http://www.niams.nih.gov/Health_Info/Lupus/default.asp)  
Booklet on SLE to help people understand the disease and how to cope with it, from the NIAMS.

[www.rheumatology.org/Practice/Clinical/Patients/Diseases\\_And\\_Conditions/Systemic\\_Lupus\\_Erythematosus\\_\(Lupus\)/](http://www.rheumatology.org/Practice/Clinical/Patients/Diseases_And_Conditions/Systemic_Lupus_Erythematosus_(Lupus)/)  
[www.rheumatology.org/Practice/Clinical/Patients/Diseases\\_And\\_Conditions/Lupus\\_Eritematoso\\_Sistemico\\_\(Lupus\)\\_\\_\(Español\)/](http://www.rheumatology.org/Practice/Clinical/Patients/Diseases_And_Conditions/Lupus_Eritematoso_Sistemico_(Lupus)__(Español)/)  
Information about SLE from the ACR, in English and Spanish.