THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT LUPUS

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
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)/
www.rheumatology.org/Practice/Clinical/Patients/Diseases_And_Conditions/Lupus_Eritematoso_Sistemic_o_(Lupus)_[Español]/
Information about SLE from the ACR, in English and Spanish.