

# Lupus Facts

**Lupus: A disease that attacks your immune system.** Systemic lupus erythematosus (known as SLE or lupus) is a chronic, inflammatory autoimmune disorder that causes the body's immune system to attack its own healthy tissues and organs.

**Nearly 1.5 million Americans have lupus,** yet it is one of the least recognized major diseases. Lupus is more prevalent than cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, sickle-cell anemia, and cystic fibrosis—combined.

**Lupus is difficult to diagnose.** Many lupus symptoms imitate symptoms of other diseases and often come and go. The disease ranges from mild to life threatening, but early diagnosis and treatment can control the symptoms and may prevent permanent organ damage.

**Lupus is not infectious, cancerous, or contagious.** Although there is no known cause, a combination of genetic, environmental and hormonal factors work together to trigger the disease.

**Ninety percent of patients are women** and most of them develop the condition between the ages of 15 and 44.

**Lupus targets women of color.** It is more common among African-American, Latina/Hispanic, Asian, and Native American women.

**While there is not yet a cure,** research uncovers promising new findings each year. There is a tremendous need for increased research to discover new treatments and a cure for lupus.

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# Lupus Symptoms

**Most people with lupus experience only a few of the symptoms, which may come and go.** The earliest symptoms typically are flu-like (aches, fever, fatigue), and there may also be a rash. More severe complications may occur if the disease progresses, and may affect the heart, lungs, kidneys, brain and blood.

Achy joints

Swollen and painful joints

Unexplained fever over 100 degrees F

Prolonged or extreme fatigue

Skin rashes

Unusual hair loss

Mouth or nose ulcers

Butterfly-shaped rash across  
the cheeks and bridge of the nose

Chest pain or shortness of breath

Anemia

Abnormal blood clotting

Sensitivity to the sun

Swollen ankles

Fingers turning white and/or  
blue in the cold

Seizures

## ***Don't Panic, But Please Don't Wait***

The above symptoms are particularly important when several occur together. Remember, no two cases are exactly alike. If you're not feeling your usual self and have some of these symptoms, contact a health professional or a lupus organization.

***Protect Yourself — Get the Facts***

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