



What is lupus?

Lupus (say “LOO-pus”) is an illness involving your immune system. Your body's immune system protects you from disease and infection. In most cases, the immune system does a great job of keeping you healthy and preventing infections. But if your immune system cannot do its job, the results can be serious.

Lupus is an **autoimmune disease**. This means that your immune system attacks healthy cells and tissues by mistake. This can damage many parts of the body, including the joints, skin, kidneys, heart, lungs, blood vessels, and brain.

Are there different kinds of lupus?

Yes. Systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) is the most common and most serious type. Erythematosus refers to the reddish color of the rashes or sores (lesions). SLE can be mild or severe, and it can affect many parts of the body.

In some people, lupus only affects their skin in the form of a rash or lesions. This type of lupus can occur on any part of the body, but usually appears where the skin is exposed to sunlight.

No two cases of lupus are exactly alike. Signs (symptoms) may come on suddenly or develop slowly. Also, symptoms change over time. Most people with lupus have mild disease with outbreaks — called flares — when signs get worse for a while, then get better or even disappear for a while.

During a flare, you feel much more tired, sick, feverish, and achy. A flare can also harm important body organs. Part of managing lupus is preventing flares. These can often follow times of physical or emotional stress. Learn to recognize the beginning signs of your flares and contact your doctor quickly.

Feeling very tired
(fatigue)

Fever

Muscle or joint pain,
stiffness, and swelling.

Hair loss

