

Lupus

Overview:

- A chronic autoimmune disease that leads to inflammation of various body tissues.
- It can affect any part of the body, which makes it serious.
- Early diagnosis is important after the onset of symptoms to prevent internal organs from being affected (such as: Kidneys).
- Medical interventions and lifestyle changes can help control the symptoms.

Definition:

Lupus is a chronic autoimmune disease that could damage any part of the body (such as: skin, joints, organs). It is not a communicable disease.

Types of Lupus:

- Systemic Lupus Erythematosus: The most common type which can be severe or mild and can affect various parts of the body.
- Discoid Lupus Erythematosus Affects the skin in the form of a rash. Could affect any part of the body but it usually appears when exposed to the sun.
- Drug - induced lupus: Occurs as a result of some medications, where the symptoms usually disappear within six months of stopping the medication. It rarely impacts the major organs.
- Neonatal lupus (rare): Affects newborns as they obtain antibodies from the infected mother's body.

Other names:

Discoid Lupus Erythematosus - Systemic Lupus Erythematosus - Lupus



Cause:

Autoimmune diseases occur when the body's immune system attacks its own tissues; however, the cause is unknown, but is thought to be linked to environmental, genetic and hormonal factors. People who have a genetic predisposition to lupus may develop the disease when stimuli appear, **including:**

- Sun.
- Some medicines (e.g. Hypertension medications, antiepileptic drugs and antibiotics).
- Infection:

Risk factors:

- Gender, as it is more common among women.
- Age, although it can affect all ages, lupus is usually detected among people aged 15 - 45 years.
- Family history.
- Psychological stress.
- Physical exhaustion.

Symptoms:

Signs or symptoms could appear suddenly or progress slowly. They could be mild or severe, temporary or permanent. Most patients suffer attacks where the symptoms and signs worsen for some time then improve or disappear completely. Signs and symptoms also depend on the affected systems in the body, including:

- Pain, stiffness and swelling of joints
- Severe fatigue
- Ulcers in the mouth and nose.
- Face rash (in the shape of a butterfly) or in other places in the body
- Chest pain.
- Impaired kidney function.



- Photosensitivity
- Shortness of breath.
- Eye dryness.
- Headaches and memory loss.
- Fingers and toes turning white or blue when exposed to coldness or when stressed.

When to see a doctor?

- You must see a doctor when the following symptoms are observed:
- Unexplainable skin rash.
- Constant pain or fatigue.
- Weight loss.
- Gland swelling
- Weak blood circulation in fingers or toes (Raynaud's disease)

Complications:

- Kidney failure.
- Brain strokes.
- Memory issues.
- Anemia or blood coagulation.
- Bleeding in the lungs and pneumonia;
- Endocarditis or Myocarditis
- Increased risk of abortion
- Increased susceptibility to infectious diseases, cancer and osteoporosis.

Diagnosis:

There is no specific test to diagnose Lupus, because the symptoms vary from person to person but the diagnosis may include:

- Medical history.
- Family history.



- Current symptoms.
- Laboratory tests: blood and urine tests
- Other tests: X-ray scans.

Treatment:

There is no treatment for lupus but lifestyle changes and some medications can help control the symptoms, including:

- Analgesics.
- Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs.
- Immunosuppressive drugs.
- Cortisone:

Prevention:

There is no way to prevent lupus, but symptoms could be eliminated by avoiding stimuli (such as: sun, stress, smoking, lack of sleep and others).

Guidelines for lupus patients:

- Having a healthy balanced diet.
- Getting sufficient rest.
- Exercising regularly.
- Avoiding exhaustion and attempting to utilize relaxation techniques
- Using sunscreen products and wearing hats for sun protection
- Avoid staying in direct sun light.
- Stop smoking.

Frequently Asked Questions:

- **Could lupus affect pregnancy?**

Lupus can cause complications in pregnancy, so check with your doctor before trying to conceive to discuss the risks and change medications if necessary.



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- **Can lupus patients get vaccines?**

Vaccines are not recommended in case of active lupus but for some inactive or stable lupus cases, some vaccines could be taken. A Doctor must be consulted in such cases.

Misconceptions:

- **Physical activities could be harmful for lupus patients**

Fact: Light to moderate exercises could be useful for patients, as they could ease joint stiffness and muscle pain

- **Lupus is similar to cancer**

Fact: Cancer is a case of abnormal malignant tissue that grows rapidly and spreads in surrounding tissues. Lupus, however, is an autoimmune disease, but some treatments for lupus may include immunosuppressive drugs, which are also used in chemotherapy.

Clinical Health Education Department

For further questions kindly contact us via email:

Hpromotion@moh.gov.sa