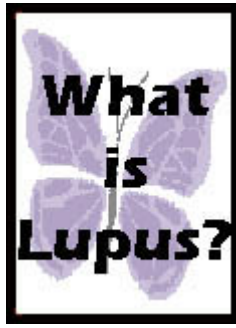


What is Lupus?



Lupus is a very serious, chronic (life-long), inflammatory, autoimmune disease. Autoimmune is a class of diseases that share one characteristic, they all involve the immune system turning against the body. Our immune systems are designed to fight off foreign invaders like bacteria and viruses. With autoimmune diseases like Lupus, the immune system sees normal healthy cells as foreign invaders and attacks them. This causes the body to respond naturally with inflammation to expel the invader. This inflammation is what causes the pain, and discomfort as well as sometimes permanent damage to the cells.

There are several different kinds of Lupus:

Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE) is the form of the disease most people are referring to when they say Lupus. It is the most common. The word systemic means the disease can affect the whole body including the skin, joints, tendons, blood vessels, muscles, organs, etc. Each Lupus patient is different some have a more mild form of SLE while others may have severe, life-threatening disease.

Life Threatening Lupus is defined as SLE affecting one or more vital organs such as the heart, lungs, kidneys, or liver.

Discoid Lupus Erythematosus (DLE) is a chronic skin disorder in which a red, raised rash appears on the face, scalp or elsewhere. The rash may last for days or even years and it also may reoccur. The raised areas may become thick and scaly and may cause scarring.

Subacute Cutaneous Lupus Erythematosus (SCLE) is skin lesions on parts of the body that are exposed to the sun. These lesions do not cause scarring.

Drug Induced Lupus (DIL or DILE) is a kind of Lupus that is caused by medications. The symptoms are similar to SLE and usually go away after the medication is discontinued.

Lupus in Overlap w/ other Connective Tissue Diseases is Lupus with one of the following other diseases as well: Rheumatoid Arthritis, Polymyositis-Dermatomyositis, Scleroderma, Sjogren's Syndrome, and various forms of Vasculitis.

Neonatal Lupus is a form of Lupus found in newborn babies born to mothers with Lupus, Sjogren's, or no disease at all. It is very important that women with Lupus be closely monitored by a physician during pregnancy.

There is no cure for Lupus at this time. We also do not know what causes Lupus. Genetics, drugs, hormones, environmental factors (UV light, viruses), etc. are all possible contributing factors to SLE. People with a family member that has an autoimmune disease are far more likely to develop SLE than the general population. Women are also far more likely to develop the disease than men so hormonal factors are being studied.

Additional sources:

<http://Cure4Lupus.org>

Lupus Foundation of America - <http://Lupus.org>