

What is it?

Lupus is a chronic autoimmune disorder that can damage a variety of areas of the body including skin, joints, and even organs. Lupus most commonly affects women of child bearing age starting at 15. African American women are 2-3 times more likely to be diagnosed. However, lupus can also affect people of all ages and races.

Lupus is referred to as the “great imitator” because its symptoms mimic those of many other diseases.

Our body’s immune system, which normally produces antibodies to protect us from foreign invaders like viruses, bacteria and germs, does not function properly with lupus. Instead, something “goes wrong.” As an autoimmune disease, the body cannot distinguish between healthy tissues and these harmful foreign invaders. The body then creates *autoantibodies* that attack healthy tissues instead. *Autoantibodies* can cause pain, inflammation, and swelling.



What are common effects?

Lupus is known for alternating periods of flares and periods of remissions. Symptoms can range from mild to life threatening and can include:

- Extreme fatigue
- Headache
- Painful and/or swollen joints
- Fever
- Anemia
- Pain in chest
- Rash across cheeks and nose
- Photosensitivity
- Mouth ulcers
- Hair loss
- Reynard’s Syndrome (extremity circulation issue)

Is there a treatment?

A combination of medicines are aimed at keeping the symptoms of lupus under control. A rheumatologist, a doctor who specializes in joints and muscles, will usually take the lead. Goals of treatment include controlling an overactive immune system, managing symptoms like inflammation and pain, controlling flare ups and minimizing potential organ damage. Commonly, corticosteroids are prescribed which can cause weight gain.

Although every person is affected differently, common triggers for flare ups have been identified. According to the *Lupus Foundation of America* (2015), these triggers can include:

- Infection
- Cold or illness
- Injury
- Exhaustion
- Emotional stress
- UV light from sun or bulbs
- Medications including Sulfa drugs, Penicillin, Minocycline

Suggested school accommodations

It is important to learn what information the student wants to share with classmates. Learning to communicate about lupus can be beneficial for all parties but is a personal decision. Sometimes the aches and pains of lupus can be referred to others as similar to experiencing the flu; fatigued, groggy, or in pain. Some even refer to this cognitive disruption as “lupus fog” that usually coincides with flare ups. Cognitive impairment can affect intelligence, reading comprehension, learning, visual memory and problem solving.

- PT/OT/Speech services
- 504/IEP accommodations
- Frequent meetings with caregivers
- Preferential classroom seating (to see board easier, exit class without disturbances)
- Unlimited bathroom pass
- Breaks, shortened school day
- Modified or limited homework
- Supplying homework prior to appointments
- Close classroom locations
- Note taker or computer
- Aid
- Plan for classes around fatigue
- Second set of books
- Extra time on tests
- Allow to participate in activities and gym per student’s symptoms
- Conversations about altered appearance from medication side effects and/or symptoms
- Limit sun exposure
- Low impact exercise

SHNIC school nurses information:

Specific health issues for individual health care plans

- Date of diagnosis with complete medical history
- Current medication list
- Pain or headache protocol including PRN medications
- Sun exposure protocol
- Location and times for rest breaks
- Physical accommodations
- Educate school personnel about nature of disease
- Assigned aid or supervision orders
- Safety restrictions for use of stairs, alone in hallways, etc.

Resources & Manuals

Lupus Foundation of America
Lupus.org

SLE Lupus Foundation
<http://www.lupusny.org>

Molly’s Fund– Fighting Lupus
<http://www.mollysfund.org/>

10 Warning Signs of a LUPUS FLARE

1. Aching or increased swelling of the joints
2. Weakness or pain in the muscles
3. Unusually high or more frequent fevers
4. An increased level of fatigue, or extreme exhaustion
5. Hair loss
6. Headaches
7. Dizziness or forgetfulness
8. Abdominal discomfort or digestive problems
9. The development of a rash
10. Any new or unexplained symptoms

To learn more about the signs, treatments, and prevention of a lupus flare, please visit:
<http://www.mollysfund.org/lupus-flares>

Molly's Fund
Fighting Lupus

www.mollysfund.org