



# What is happening to **MY BODY?**

## LUPUS AND AFRICAN AMERICANS

Our body has built in protections to help us against “foreign invaders” like viruses, bacteria, germs and infections. This is our immune system. Lupus (LOOP-us) is a disease that causes your body to “fight” against itself. When you have lupus, your immune system can’t tell the difference between these “foreign invaders” and your healthy tissue, so it begins to wage a battle against itself.

**LUPUS** is a serious disease that causes your body to “fight” against itself.

many other physical symptoms that impact their body and mind (it can damage any part of the body). For others, they may have no visible symptoms of lupus. The symptoms of lupus can also be unclear, come and go, or change over the course of the disease.

African American women get lupus three times more than white women. People with lupus may experience many different symptoms like general body aches and pains, feeling really tired, hair loss, pain and swelling in their joints, issues with mood, emotions and memory, skin changes and

### WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

- A red rash over your nose and cheeks.
- Feeling sick or getting a rash after being in the sun.
- Feeling very tired all the time, even when you have gotten enough sleep.
- Joint pain and swelling.
- Fingers/toes that turn lighter or turn purple in the cold or when under stress.

### Could Clinical Trials Offer Hope?

Clinical trials are studies that research medications, or procedures to see if they are safe and work in people who have diseases such as lupus. African American participation in clinical trials is important so that we can find the best treatment options now and for generations to come. For more information, visit [Lupus.org/Impact](http://Lupus.org/Impact).

**There are many things that can happen to your body — including how you look and feel — when you have lupus.**

## Four Types of Lupus

### SYSTEMIC LUPUS

#### ERYTHEMATOSUS (SLE):

This affects the body's heart, kidney, joints and other parts of the body that may also include skin.

#### LUPUS AFFECTING THE SKIN (CUTANEOUS):

This type of lupus only affects the skin.

**DRUG-INDUCED LUPUS:** Lupus that is a reaction to taking a certain medication.

#### NEONATAL LUPUS:

Rare condition associated with antibodies from the mother that affect the fetus.



## What You Should Know About Lupus

- About 1 in 250 African American women will develop lupus.
- Black women get lupus 3 times more than white women.
- Lupus can affect any part of your body and often attacks the skin, heart, kidneys, brain and joints.
- 9 out of 10 people with lupus are women, but men and kids get lupus too.
- Lupus is not contagious. You can't spread it from person to person.
- Experts don't know what causes lupus, but think that genetics and environmental triggers (e.g. sun exposure) play a role.



## How Do I Know If I Have Lupus?

There is no single test for lupus. However, a positive ANA (anti-nuclear antibody) test along with other tests or physical changes in your body helps your doctor determine if you have lupus.

Look out for the symptoms. They are often the first indicators of the disease. If you have any symptoms of lupus, you should talk to your doctor right away.

## LIVING WITH Lupus

People with lupus can live healthy, long and fulfilling lives. Knowing about the disease, listening to your body, working with your doctors, and taking your medications are all important. A healthy lifestyle is also important for people living with lupus.

**A healthy diet that has less fried foods is important.** Eating more fruits, vegetables and drinking lots of water are good steps to being healthy.

**Wear sunscreen to protect your skin in the sun.** Yes, brown or darker skin can sunburn. People with lupus must always protect their skin from the sun.

**Exercise is good for everyone.** For those with lupus, exercise is even more important to help with joint pain and exhaustion.

**Stop smoking.** Smoking can make your lupus worse.

**Get your sleep.** Give your body the rest it needs, which is even more important for people with lupus.

**Have a good support system.** Make sure that your family and friends understand what lupus is. There will be times that you may not feel well and need their help. Family members are encouraged to contact the Lupus Foundation of America for support.

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The Cruel Mystery  
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