



Lupus Awareness Month: The Illness You Can't Always See

May is Lupus Awareness Month, highlighting a condition that often goes unseen but deeply felt. Lupus is a chronic autoimmune disease that can affect multiple parts of the body, with many people experiencing symptoms for years before diagnosis. It disproportionately impacts women, especially Black women, making awareness around early recognition, advocacy and support essential.

Understanding Lupus Beyond the Surface

Lupus is an autoimmune disease, meaning the body's immune system mistakenly attacks its own healthy tissues. This can affect the joints, skin, kidneys, brain and other organs, leading to inflammation and long-term complications. Because symptoms can mimic other conditions, lupus is often called "the great imitator."

Common symptoms include fatigue, joint pain, skin rashes and sensitivity to sunlight, but no two cases look exactly the same. Diagnosis can take years, which delays treatment and increases the risk of complications.

Why it matters

Lupus disproportionately affects women, particularly women of color, with Black women being significantly more likely to develop the condition. Despite this, there are still gaps in awareness, access to care and early diagnosis, which can lead to more severe health outcomes over time.

Because lupus symptoms are often invisible, many people suffer in silence or feel misunderstood. The unpredictability of flare-ups can impact daily life, mental health and overall quality of life. Raising awareness helps people recognize symptoms sooner, seek care earlier and better support those living with the condition.

What you can do

- Pay attention to ongoing symptoms like fatigue, joint pain, or unexplained rashes.
- Schedule regular checkups and advocate for thorough testing if something feels off.
- Protect your body from known triggers like excessive sun exposure.
- Support those living with lupus by listening and learning, not minimizing.
- Prioritize both physical and mental health when managing chronic conditions.



<https://marincityclinic.org/>



The mission of **The Balm In Gilead, Inc.** is to improve the health of individuals who are most at risk for chronic and acute diseases by supporting faith and community organizations in areas that mobilize and strengthen their capacity to increase awareness in areas of prevention, treatment and access to care through education, programming and advocacy. Learn more at balmingilead.org.

The Balm In Gilead supports your health journey. The content we share is for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for medical advice. Always consult your doctor or qualified healthcare provider. Additionally, any medical professionals contributing their general expertise are not providing personal medical care or forming a patient-provider relationship.