

Fact Sheet

Lupus is an autoimmune disease that can cause pain and inflammation in the body. Symptoms can flare up at any time and are different for every person. Lupus disproportionately affects racial and ethnic minority women. Although lupus cannot be cured, medications can prevent flares, treat symptoms, and reduce organ damage and other problems.

Office of Minority Health and Health Equity

What is lupus?

Lupus is a chronic (long-term) autoimmune disease that can damage many parts of the body. Autoimmune diseases occur when a body's immune system mistakenly attacks and destroys healthy cells, tissues, and organs. These attacks cause inflammation that leads to tissue damage, which may be permanent in some cases.



What are the symptoms of lupus?

Lupus is a disease where symptoms sometimes are worse (flares) and other times are better (remission). Symptoms may differ from person to person and may change over time. They include:

- Muscle and joint pain
- Prolonged or extreme fatigue
- Rash
- Chest pain
- Hair loss
- Sun or light sensitivity
- Fever
- Mouth sores
- Anemia
- Memory problems
- Blood clotting
- Eye disease
- Kidney problems (lupus nephritis)

Who is affected by lupus?

About 9 out of 10 people diagnosed with lupus are women aged 15 to 44, but men are affected as well. Notably, it's more common in African American, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, and American Indian/Alaska Native women. African American women are three times more likely to get lupus, and they may develop the disease at a younger age and have more serious and life-threatening complications than non-Hispanic white women.

How is lupus treated?

BLYS-specific inhibitors are medications that limit the amount of abnormal B cells (cells in the immune system that create antibodies) found in people with lupus. Belimumab, a type of BLYS-specific inhibitor, is the first and only medication specifically developed for and approved to treat lupus.

Treatment options to manage lupus symptoms

- **Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs):** NSAIDs may help reduce mild pain and swelling in joints and muscles
- **Corticosteroids:** may help reduce swelling, tenderness, and pain
- **Antimalarials:** prevent or treat malaria and also treat joint pain, skin rashes, fatigue, and lung inflammation
- **Immunosuppressive drugs/chemotherapy:** may be used in severe cases, when lupus affects major organs or other treatments do not work

Lupus and clinical trials

The FDA encourages diverse participation in clinical trials. If you think a clinical trial may be right for you, talk to your health care provider. You can also search for clinical trials in your area at www.clinicaltrials.gov.

For more information on health equity, visit www.fda.gov/healthequity.

