



ARTHRITIS AND RHEUMATISM ASSOCIATES, P.C.

Board Certified Rheumatologists

Herbert S.B. Baraf
MD FACP FACR

Robert L. Rosenberg
MD FACR CCD

Evan L. Siegel
MD FACR

Emma DiIorio
MD FACR

David G. Borenstein
MD FACP FACR

Alan K. Matsumoto
MD FACR

Robert J. Lloyd
MD MACR

David P. Wolfe
MD FACR

Paul J. DeMarco
MD FACP FACR

Shari B. Diamond
MD FACR

Ashley D. Beall
MD FACR

Angus B. Worthing
MD FACR

Guada Respicio
MD MS FACR

Justin Peng
MD

What is Lupus?

*By Guada Respicio, MD, MS, FACR
Arthritis and Rheumatism Associates, PC*



Systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), or lupus, is a systemic autoimmune condition that can affect any part of the body. Autoimmune conditions are illnesses that occur when the body's cells and tissues are attacked by its own immune system resulting in inflammation and tissue damage. Patients with lupus produce abnormal antibodies in their blood targeting tissues (autoantibodies) as opposed to foreign infectious agents. Patients present with a myriad of complaints and symptoms; it can affect the skin, heart, lungs, kidneys, joints, and/or nervous system. When localized to the skin, without internal disease, it is called discoid lupus. Only when internal organs are involved is the condition referred to as systemic lupus erythematosus.

Who gets lupus?

Lupus is predominantly a disease of women. It may present at any age, although its peak incidence is during the childbearing years, between 15 and 45, at which time the female-to-male ratio climbs, reaching a peak ratio of approximately 12:1. It occurs worldwide, although it is likely under-recognized and under-diagnosed in developing countries. In the U.S., lupus is most prevalent

among those of non-Caucasian descent, with those of African heritage most affected.

What are lupus symptoms?

Patients often report fatigue, low-grade fever, loss of appetite, muscle/joint aches, sores in the mouth and nose, facial rash over the bridge of their nose ("butterfly rash"), unusual sensitivity to sunlight, inflammation of the lining that surrounds the lungs and the heart, and poor circulation to the fingers and toes with cold exposure (Raynaud's phenomenon). Complications may occur depending on the organ affected and the severity of the disease. Given its heterogeneous presentation, no single test can confirm and establish its diagnosis. A physician who specializes in lupus (rheumatologist) will evaluate the patient and make this clinical diagnosis.

What is the treatment for lupus?

It is a chronic condition hence there is no cure for SLE. Its management is individualized, guided by the degree and severity of specific symptoms and organ involvement, with the goal focused on relieving symptoms and protecting the organs involved.