



Treating Lupus

If you've been diagnosed with lupus, you're probably wondering how it's treated. One of the most important things to know about treating lupus is that it's a team effort. You and your treatment team will work together to find the combination of medicines that's right for you. Your treatment plan may depend on things like your age, your lifestyle, and how healthy you are.

While there's no cure for lupus right now, having the right treatment plan can help:

- Control your symptoms — like joint pain, inflammation (swelling), and feeling tired
- Keep your immune system from attacking your body
- Protect your organs from damage

Treating lupus can be difficult. It can take months — or even years — to find the right treatment plan for you. The good news is there are medicines that can help you feel better.

What medicines can treat lupus?

Because lupus can cause a lot of different symptoms, there are many different kinds of medicines that can treat it. A doctor will need to prescribe some of them — others are available over the counter.

The most common medicines used to treat lupus include:

- **Anti-inflammatories** to help with inflammation and pain
- **Antimalarials** to protect skin from rashes and UV light
- **Biologics** to help your immune system work correctly
- **Anticoagulants** to help prevent blood clots
- **Immunosuppressives** to help keep your immune system from attacking your body
- **Steroids** to help with inflammation

The immune system is the part of the body that fights off bacteria and viruses to help you stay healthy.

What about alternative medicines?

If you're thinking of trying alternative treatments — like herbal medicines — always talk with your doctors first. Some alternative treatments might not be safe to take with certain medicines, and some could make your symptoms worse. Very few alternative medicines have been tested in people with lupus.

Keep in mind that any medicine you take for lupus can have side effects, and some medicines could put you at risk for life-threatening infections. Talk with your doctors about what changes to watch for with the medicines you're taking. And tell your treatment team right away if you have any side effects.

What do I ask the doctor?

It's normal to have a lot of questions when you and your doctors are working together to develop your treatment plan.

Here are some ideas for questions to ask about your medicines:

- ✓ What is the name of this medicine?
- ✓ How will this medicine help me?
- ✓ Is it okay to take the generic version instead of the brand name?
- ✓ How much do I need to take and when?
- ✓ What are the possible side effects?
- ✓ When will this medicine start to work?
- ✓ Is it safe to take with my other medicines?

Work with your doctors to find a treatment plan that's right for you

You may have to try many different medicines before you find a combination that works for you — and that can mean a lot of back and forth with your treatment team. Playing an active role in your health care can help you and your doctors find the right medicines for you faster.

Keep in mind that people with lupus usually see more than 1 doctor for treatment. That means it's especially important to keep everyone on your treatment team updated.

Remember, treating lupus is a team effort — so check in with your doctor often. In time, you and your doctor can find a treatment plan that's right for you.



Here are some things you can do to play an active role in your treatment:

- ✓ Use a journal to keep track of your medicines, the doses you're taking, and any side effects you notice
- ✓ Let your treatment team know if you're having side effects or if your symptoms change after starting a new medicine
- ✓ Share any concerns you have about your treatment with your doctors
- ✓ Write down questions about your treatment for the doctor ahead of time and take them to your appointments
- ✓ Ask a friend or family member to go with you to appointments for support — they can also help you keep track of your questions and information about your treatment

For more information on treating lupus, please visit the **National Resource Center on Lupus** at:

Resources.Lupus.org/Topics/Treatment-Options