

# Lupus fact sheet

## What is lupus?

Lupus is a chronic disease, meaning it is a long term disease that should be managed. Lupus affects the immune system and is called an autoimmune disease. The immune system's job is to fight foreign invaders, like germs and viruses. But in autoimmune diseases, the immune system is out of control and mistakenly attacks healthy tissue.

## Who is at risk for lupus?

While anyone can develop lupus, women are affected more than men. Lupus is two to three times more common in African American women compared to White women. Lupus also usually begins during child bearing years (15-44).

## What are the complications of lupus?

Because lupus usually begins during child bearing years (15-44), it can seriously affect young women's goals for education, career, family, and health. Lupus, especially when not treated, can lead to organ damage and reduce physical, mental, and social health.

## What are the signs and symptoms of lupus?

The most common signs and symptoms of lupus are: pain or swelling in your joints that always seems to come back; reoccurring sores in your mouth; rashes on your skin; low-grade fevers you can't explain; and extreme exhaustion no matter how much sleep you get.

## How is lupus diagnosed?

Lupus is hard to detect because the signs and symptoms are similar to other diseases and may come and go. Because diagnosis can be challenging, your health care provider may refer you to a [rheumatologist](#), a doctor that specializes in autoimmune diseases.

## What can I do?

If you've been experiencing symptoms (one or more), it's time to schedule an appointment to talk to your health care provider. If you think a friend may be experiencing symptoms of lupus, share [befiercetakecontrol.org](http://befiercetakecontrol.org) - a website that provides more information and resources to help.

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