Understanding Lupus

Everyone has an immune system. Its job is to protect the body by attacking things that do not belong in the body, such as germs. In some people, the immune system attacks the body itself. These people are said to have an autoimmune disease.

What Is Lupus?

Lupus is one type of autoimmune disease. It can cause inflammation in the skin, muscles and joints, and internal organs. Lupus has many different symptoms. These symptoms vary from person to person and may change over time.

Types of Lupus

There are four types of lupus:

1. **Systemic lupus erythematosus** (SLE) is the most common type. Systemic means that it affects many parts of the body. Erythematous means redness. When people say lupus, they usually mean SLE. SLE is a chronic (long-term) disease. If you have SLE, talk with your healthcare provider about your symptoms. While there is no cure for SLE, there are many ways to help manage it.

2. **Cutaneous lupus erythematosus** (cutaneous refers to skin). This type of lupus only affects the skin. The most common type causes red, raised rashes that do not itch. This is known as a discoid rash. Another type of cutaneous lupus may appear after spending time in the sun.

3. **Drug-induced lupus erythematosus** is caused by some medicines. The symptoms usually go away when the medicine is stopped.

4. **Neonatal lupus** is a condition that appears in newborns of women with SLE. Symptoms go away after several months.

Use the space below to write down any questions you have about lupus:

Who Gets Lupus?

The cause of lupus is not known. Anyone can get lupus. Lupus is nine times more common in women than in men.

- Women are most likely to get lupus between 15 and 44 years of age.
- Lupus is more common in women of color.
- Lupus may run in families. But most people with lupus do not have a close relative with lupus.

Talk with your healthcare provider about a lupus management plan.