

Systemic Lupus Erythematosus

Each person has specific toxic exposures along with dietary and genetic weaknesses that are causing their symptoms. Toxic exposures can be inorganic like heavy metals, DDT, VOC's, Radio-active waste and any other chemical like food additives or pesticides and fertilizers sprayed on the foods. They can also be organic or living organisms like parasites, bacteria, viruses, or fungi. All the different possible combinations make it difficult to accurately address issues unless you have experienced medical professionals mapping through all your different clinical symptoms.

Dr. Marilyn Tucker founded The Vibrant Health Community to do Symptom Mapping to be able to bring a completely personalized plan for each person. When you join the Vibrant Health Community you have your own medical team of doctor, pharmacist and health coach. This Team specializes in Integrative-Complementary Medicine. They will work with your personal physician to bring you to a place of as much natural healing as your body will allow. For those of you that have health issues that require prescription medications, your Team can help introduce natural measures that can reduce the imbalances and complications that inevitably come with prescription medication. This can reduce side effects and possible additional drugs having to be introduced.

Definition

Systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) is a chronic, inflammatory autoimmune disorder. It may affect the skin, joints, kidneys, and other organs.

Alternative Names

Disseminated lupus erythematosus; SLE; Lupus; Lupus erythematosus

Causes, incidence, and risk factors

SLE (lupus) is an autoimmune disease. This means there is a problem with the body's normal immune system response. Normally, the immune system helps protect the body from harmful substances. But in patients with an autoimmune disease, the immune system can't tell the difference between harmful substances and healthy ones. The result is an overactive immune response that attacks otherwise healthy cells and tissue. This leads to chronic (long-term) inflammation.

The underlying cause of autoimmune diseases is not fully known. Some researchers think autoimmune diseases occur after infection with an organism that looks like certain proteins in the body. The proteins are later mistaken for the organism and wrongly targeted for attack by the body's immune system.

SLE may be mild or severe enough to cause death.

SLE affects nine times as many women as men. It may occur at any age, but appears most often in people between the ages of 10 and 50 years. African Americans and Asians are affected more often than people from other races.

SLE may also be caused by certain drugs. For information on this cause of SLE, see drug-induced lupus erythematosus.

Symptoms

Symptoms vary from person to person, and may come and go. The condition may affect one organ or body system at first. Others may become involved later. Almost all people with SLE have joint pain and most develop arthritis. Frequently affected joints are the fingers, hands, wrists, and knees.

Inflammation of various parts of the heart may occur as pericarditis, endocarditis, or myocarditis. Chest pain and arrhythmias may result from these conditions.

General symptoms include:

- Fever
- Fatigue
- General discomfort, uneasiness or ill feeling (malaise)
- Skin rash -- a "butterfly" rash over the cheeks and bridge of the nose affects about half of those with SLE. The rash gets worse when in sunlight. The rash may also be widespread.
- Sensitivity to sunlight

- Joint pain and swelling
- Arthritis
- Swollen glands
- Muscle aches
- Nausea and vomiting
- Pleurisy (causes chest pain)
- Pleural effusions
- Seizures
- Psychosis

Additional symptoms that may be associated with this disease:

- Blood in the urine
- Coughing up blood
- Nosebleed
- Swallowing difficulty
- Skin color is patchy
- Red spots on skin
- Fingers that change color upon pressure or in the cold
- Numbness and tingling
- Mouth sores
- Hair loss
- Abdominal pain
- Visual disturbance
- Blood disorders, including blood clots

Treatment

There is no cure for SLE. Treatment is aimed at controlling symptoms.

Expectations (prognosis)

The outcome for people with SLE has improved over recent years. Many of those with SLE have mild illness. Women with SLE who become pregnant are often able to carry the pregnancy safely to term and deliver normal infants, as long as there is no severe kidney or heart disease present and the SLE is being treated appropriately.

The presence of anti-phospholipid antibodies may increase the possibility of pregnancy loss.

The 10-year survival rate for lupus patients is greater than 85%. People with severe involvement of the brain, lungs, heart, and kidney do worse than others in terms of overall survival and disability.

Complications

Some people with SLE have deposits of antibodies within the cells (glomeruli) of the kidneys. This leads to a condition called lupus nephritis. Patients with this condition may eventually develop kidney failure and require dialysis or kidney transplantation.

Other complications include:

- Infection
- Thrombocytopenia
- Hemolytic anemia
- Myocarditis
- Seizures

Calling your health care provider

Call your health care provider if symptoms of SLE are present. Also, call if you have SLE and symptoms worsen, or if new symptoms develop.

References

Harris ED, Budd RC, Genovese MC, Firestein GS, Sargent JS, Sledge CB. *Kelley's Textbook of Rheumatology*. 7th ed. St. Louis, Mo: WB Saunders; 2005.

Noble J. *Textbook of Primary Care Medicine*. 3rd ed. St. Louis, Mo: Mosby; 2001.