

# About us

The Lupus Foundation of Australasia is dedicated to empowering people affected by lupus by advancing research, raising public awareness, and providing trusted support and education.

Built on the belief that no one should face lupus alone, we serve as a bridge between medical science and everyday life, helping individuals, and carers understand, manage and advocate for better outcomes.

Through collaboration, advocacy and communications, we aim to shorten the time to diagnosis, improve access to evidence-based care, and ensure everyone with lupus is supported, heard and valued.

# For more information on lupus

Please visit the Lupus Foundation of Australasia at:  
[www.lupusfoundationaustralia.org/resources](http://www.lupusfoundationaustralia.org/resources)

**References:** **1.** Moulton VR et al. *Trends Mol Med* 2017;23(7):615-635. **2.** BMJ Best Practice. *Systemic lupus erythematosus*. Accessed 2025. **3.** Justiz Vaillant, 2015. *Systemic Lupus Erythematosus*. Florida: StatPearls Publishing. **4.** BMJ Best Practice. *Patient information: SLE*. Accessed 2025. **5.** Lupus Foundation of America. *What is a lupus flare?* Accessed 2025. **6.** Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA). *Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE)*. Accessed 2025. **7.** The Australasian College of Dermatologists. *Cutaneous Lupus Erythematosus*. Accessed 2025.

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# What is Lupus

## What is Lupus?

Systematic lupus erythematosus (SLE), more commonly known as lupus, is a chronic autoimmune condition where the immune system mistakenly targets its own tissues as foreign.<sup>1</sup>

This can lead to inflammation and damage in different organs, with symptoms and severity varying from person to person.<sup>1-3</sup>

## Who does it affect?<sup>4</sup>

Lupus can affect anyone of any age, but it's most common in women of childbearing age. It's also more common in people with a family history of lupus, those taking certain medications, and in individuals who smoke.

## How does it manifest?<sup>3</sup>

Lupus can affect people in different ways, which is why it can be hard to diagnose and treat. Symptoms range from mild to severe and can also change over time.

## Do symptoms subside?<sup>5</sup>

Symptoms may come and go in what are called "flares" or "flare ups". This is when symptoms become more active or worsen, or new ones appear.

Between flare ups, symptoms may improve or even disappear for a while in what is termed "remission".

## What causes lupus flares?<sup>6</sup>

Lupus flare-ups can be caused by a number of factors including:

- Certain medication
- Viral and bacterial infections
- Exposure to UV light (mostly sun exposure)
- Stress
- Hormones
- Pregnancy

## Are there different types of lupus?<sup>6,7</sup>

Lupus can be best understood as a spectrum of diseases. Several different types of lupus exist that each affect the body in different ways.

The main groups are SLE and cutaneous lupus erythematosus (CLE).

### SLE is the most common form of lupus affecting multiple body systems.

- Involves skin and joints, but can also affect the kidneys, lungs, heart, blood vessels, or brain.
- People generally experience flare-ups and periods of remission.

### CLE just affects the skin and causes rashes. There are various subtypes.

- Some types occur in isolation; others with SLE, where joints and organs may be involved.
- Disease that is ANA negative may well resolve with some avoidance measures.
- Involves specialist treatment by a dermatologist.

## There are four main subtypes of CLE:

### Discoid lupus (chronic cutaneous lupus)

- Red, scaly rashes on sun-exposed areas such as face, scalp, arms, legs, or torso.

### Subacute CLE

- Causes skin rashes, sensitivity to sunlight, and joint aches.

### Lupus profundus

- Inflammation affecting layer of fat under skin causing firm, painful lumps (nodules).

### ANA-negative cutaneous lupus

- Also called seronegative lupus, is a form of lupus limited to the skin.
- Not detected on standard blood tests and behaves differently from other types of lupus.

Other lupus types include drug-induced lupus, caused by some medications, neonatal lupus (affecting newborns) and paediatric lupus in children.

## How is lupus treated?<sup>4</sup>

Lupus is usually managed with a combination of medications and lifestyle changes, such as eating healthy, staying active, reducing sun exposure and looking after your mental health.

Your GP and specialist will work with you to create a treatment plan tailored to your needs.

## Is there hope?

Although there is no current cure for lupus, symptoms can improve and many people go on to lead fulfilling lives.