



Enter search term here **Search**

Lupus

Captured 10/19/11

Text Size:

Advertisement

Print Share Reprints

- Definition
- Symptoms
- Causes
- Risk factors
- Complications
- Preparing for your appointment
- Tests and diagnosis**
- Treatments and drugs
- Lifestyle and home remedies
- Alternative medicine
- Coping and support

Tests and diagnosis

By Mayo Clinic staff

Diagnosing lupus is difficult because signs and symptoms vary considerably from person to person. Signs and symptoms of lupus may change over time and overlap with those of many other disorders. For these reasons, doctors may not initially consider lupus until the signs and symptoms become more obvious. Even then, lupus can be challenging to diagnose because nearly all people with lupus experience fluctuations in disease activity. At times the disease may become severe and at other times subside completely.

American College of Rheumatology criteria for a lupus diagnosis

The American College of Rheumatology (ACR) has developed clinical and laboratory criteria to help physicians diagnose and classify lupus. If you have 4 of the 11 criteria at one time or individually over time, you probably have lupus. Your doctor may also consider the diagnosis of lupus even if you have fewer than four of these signs and symptoms. The criteria identified by the ACR include:

Face rash, which doctors call a malar rash, that is butterfly shaped and covers the bridge of the nose and spreads across the cheeks

Scaly rash, called a discoid rash, which appears as raised, scaly patches

Sun-related rash, which appears after exposure to sunlight

Mouth sores, which are usually painless

Joint pain and swelling that occurs in two or more joints

Swelling of the linings around the lungs or the heart

Kidney disease

A neurological disorder, such as seizures or psychosis

Low blood counts, such as low red blood count, low platelet count (thrombocytopenia), or a low white cell count (leukopenia)

Positive antinuclear antibody tests, which indicate that you may have an autoimmune disease

Other positive blood tests that may indicate an autoimmune disease, such as a positive double-stranded anti-DNA test, positive anti-Sm test, positive anti-phospholipid antibody test or false-positive syphilis test

Laboratory tests

Your doctor may order blood and urine tests to determine your diagnosis, including:

Check out these best-sellers and special offers on books and newsletters from Mayo Clinic.

Try Mayo Clinic Health Letter FREE!
Conquer arthritis pain and lead a more active life
Control fibromyalgia with tips from this DVD
Register for our email service and receive a FREE gift!

The Mayo Clinic Diet — Eat well. Enjoy life. Lose weight.

Mayo Clinic is a not-for-profit organization and proceeds from Web advertising help support our mission. Mayo Clinic does not endorse any of the products and services advertised.

Advertising and sponsorship policy
Advertising and sponsorship opportunities

Share stories. Learn.
Join Mayo Clinic's online community.

Free E-Newsletters

Subscribe to receive the latest updates on health topics.

[About our newsletters](#)

- Housecall
- Alzheimer's caregiving
- Living with cancer

Enter e-mail

Subscribe

RSS Feeds

Get **free personalized** health guidance for you and your family.

Get Started

Complete blood count. This test measures the number of red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets as well as the amount of hemoglobin, a protein in red blood cells. Results may indicate you have anemia, which commonly occurs in lupus. A low white blood cell or platelet count may occur in lupus as well.

Erythrocyte sedimentation rate. This blood test determines the rate at which red blood cells settle to the bottom of a tube in an hour. A faster than normal rate may indicate a systemic disease, such as lupus. The sedimentation rate isn't specific for any one disease, but it may be elevated if you have lupus, another inflammatory condition or an infection.

Kidney and liver assessment. Blood tests can assess how well your kidneys and liver are functioning. Lupus can affect these organs.

Urinalysis. An examination of a sample of your urine may show an increased protein level or red blood cells in the urine, which may occur if lupus has affected your kidneys.

Antinuclear antibody (ANA) test. A positive test for the presence of these antibodies — produced by your immune system — indicates a stimulated immune system, which is common in lupus and other autoimmune diseases. A positive ANA doesn't always mean that you have lupus, however. ANA levels can be elevated if you have an infection or if you're taking certain medications. If you test positive for ANA, your doctor may advise more-specific antibody testing and refer you to a rheumatologist, a doctor who specializes in musculoskeletal and autoimmune disorders such as arthritis or lupus.

Chest X-ray. An image of your chest may reveal abnormal shadows that suggest fluid or inflammation in your lungs. It may also show an enlarged heart as a result of a buildup of fluid within the pericardium (pericardial effusion).

Electrocardiogram (ECG). This test measures the pattern of electrical impulses generated in your heart. It can help identify irregular rhythms or damage.

Syphilis test. A false-positive result on a syphilis test can indicate anti-phospholipid antibodies in your blood, another indication of lupus. The presence of anti-phospholipid antibodies has been associated with an increased risk of blood clots, strokes and recurrent miscarriages.

[Preparing for your appointment](#)

[Treatments and drugs](#)

See Also

[ANA test](#)

References

March 26, 2011

DS00115

© 1998-2011 Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research (MFMER). All rights reserved. A single copy of these materials may be reprinted for noncommercial personal use only. "Mayo," "Mayo Clinic," "MayoClinic.com," "EmbodyHealth," "Enhance your life," and the triple-shield Mayo Clinic logo are trademarks of Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research.

About this site	Site help	Contact us	E-newsletter
Blogs	Podcasts	Slide shows	Videos
Site map	Reprints and permissions		

Find Mayo Clinic on

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[YouTube](#)

[Privacy policy](#) (Updated

Aug. 2, 2011) [Terms and conditions of use policy](#) (Updated Aug. 2, 2011)

LEGAL CONDITIONS AND TERMS OF USE APPLICABLE TO ALL USERS OF THIS SITE. ANY USE OF THIS SITE
CONSTITUTES YOUR AGREEMENT TO THESE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF USE.

© 1998-2011 Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research. All rights reserved.



We comply with the HONcode standard for trustworthy health information: [verify here](#).