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Understanding Systemic Lupus (SLE)

🌸 What is Lupus?

Systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), often called lupus, is a chronic autoimmune disease. The body's immune system, which usually fights infections, mistakenly attacks healthy tissues, causing inflammation, pain, and damage in many body parts.

Lupus in Numbers

Worldwide prevalence: An estimated 5 million people live with lupus.

United States: About 1.5 million Americans are affected.

Gender: 9 out of 10 cases occur in women.

Age: Most common between 15 and 45 years old.

Ethnicity: More frequent and often more severe in African American, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American women.

Delayed diagnosis: On average, lupus patients see 3–6 doctors over nearly 6 years before receiving a correct diagnosis.

Survival: With early diagnosis and treatment, the 5-year survival rate exceeds 90%, compared to <50% in the 1950s.

👤 Who Does it Affect?

Women of childbearing age (15–45 years) are most often affected. It is more common in women of African, Hispanic, Asian, and Native descent than in Caucasian women.

Both men and children can also develop lupus, though less frequently.

Common Symptoms

- Symptoms can come and go ("flares and remissions") and vary widely:
- Persistent fatigue
- Joint pain and swelling
- Skin rashes, especially a butterfly-shaped rash across cheeks and nose
- Sun sensitivity

Mouth or nose ulcers
Hair loss
Fever without clear cause
Kidney issues (protein in urine, swelling in legs)
Chest pain or shortness of breath (if heart or lungs are affected)

🔍 How is Lupus Diagnosed?

There is no single test for lupus. Doctors use:

- Medical history and physical exam
- Blood tests (ANA, anti-dsDNA, anti-Smith antibodies)
- Urine tests (for kidney involvement)
- Imaging or biopsies if organs are affected

💊 Treatment Options

There is no cure, but lupus can be managed with:

- Anti-inflammatory medicines (NSAIDs) for pain/swelling
- Antimalarials (hydroxychloroquine/ Plaquenil) to reduce flares and protect organs
- Corticosteroids (prednisone) for inflammation control
- Immunosuppressants (azathioprine, mycophenolate, methotrexate) are used when organs are affected
- Biologics (belimumab, anifrolumab) for severe or resistant lupus

Lifestyle also matters:

- Balanced diet (rich in fruits, vegetables, omega-3s)
- Regular rest and gentle exercise
- Stress management and prayer
- Sun protection (hats, sunscreen, long sleeves)

🙏 Living with Lupus – Hope & Encouragement

Though lupus is lifelong, many people live full and active lives. Those affected can manage flares and protect long-term health with proper treatment, self-care, and support from family, faith, and community.

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." – 2 Corinthians 12:9

✂️ Quick Facts

- Lupus is not contagious.
- Early diagnosis and treatment are key to preventing complications.
- Support groups and counseling can help with the emotional burden.

🌟 **Takeaway:** Lupus is a challenging condition, but with faith, medical care, and lifestyle adjustments, individuals can live with resilience and hope.