**Systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE)**, also known as lupus, is a chronic disease that causes inflammation in many parts of the body. The disease can affect the skin, joints, kidneys, heart, lungs, central nervous system, and blood. Lupus affects women more than men and occurs more often among American blacks and Asians.

**SIGNS/SYMPTOMS**
- **Rashes:**
  - Butterfly-shaped rash on the cheeks
  - Red rash on the hands and feet
  - Rash that spreads over the body
- **Other symptoms:**
  - Fever
  - Fatigue
  - Weight loss
  - Hair loss
  - Anemia
  - Kidney problems
  - Lung or heart inflammation
  - Arthritis
  - Mouth sores
  - Abnormal blood tests such as low blood cell counts

**COMMON TREATMENTS**
- **Hydroxychloroquine**, a drug that can help prevent joint pain and other symptoms of lupus.
- **Azathioprine**, a drug that can help prevent joint pain and other symptoms of lupus.
- **Corticosteroids**, a type of medicine that can help reduce inflammation.
- **Benlysta**, a drug that can help reduce inflammation.

**PATIENT FACT SHEET**

**Condition**
- **Systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE)**, also known as lupus, is a chronic disease that causes inflammation in many parts of the body.

**Description**
- Lupus can affect the skin, joints, kidneys, heart, lungs, central nervous system, and blood.
- The disease is more common in some ethnic groups, mainly blacks and Asians, and tends to be worse in these groups.

**Care/Management Tips**
- **Most people with lupus can live normal lives.** Treatment of lupus has improved, and people with the disease are living longer. A good doctor-patient relationship and support from family and friends can help you cope with this chronic and often unpredictable illness. Learn as much as you can about lupus, your medications, and what kind of progress to expect.
- **Take all your medications as your doctor prescribes, and visit your rheumatologist often to prevent serious problems.** This lets your doctor keep track of your disease and change your treatment as needed.
- **Stay active.** Exercise helps keep joints flexible and may prevent heart disease and strokes. Avoid excess sun exposure. Sunlight can cause a lupus rash to flare and may even trigger a serious flare of the disease itself. When outdoors on a sunny day, wear protective clothing (long sleeves, a big-brimmed hat) and use lots of sunscreen.
- **If you are a young woman with lupus and wish to have a baby, carefully plan your pregnancy.** With your doctor’s guidance, time your pregnancy for when your lupus activity is low. While pregnant, avoid medications that can harm your baby.

**Notes:**
- **Lupus flares vary from mild to serious.** Most patients have times when the disease is active, followed by times when the disease is mostly quiet - referred to as a remission. Yet, there is much reason for hope. Improvements in treatment have greatly improved these patients’ quality of life and increased their lifespan.
- **Care for your child.** If your child has lupus, you may need to adjust daily living to help your child. With your doctor’s guidance, you can learn how best to take care of your child.
- **If you are a young woman with lupus and wish to have a baby, carefully plan your pregnancy.** With your doctor’s guidance, time your pregnancy for when your lupus activity is low. While pregnant, avoid medications that can harm your baby.

**Updated March 2019 by Suleman Bhana, MD, and reviewed by the American College of Rheumatology Committee on Communications and Marketing. This information is provided for general education only. Individuals should consult a qualified health care provider for professional medical advice, diagnosis and treatment of a medical or health condition.**

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