



Autoimmune Disorders

An autoimmune disorder is a condition that occurs when the immune system mistakenly attacks and destroys healthy body tissue. There are more than 80 different types of autoimmune disorders. Normally the immune system's white blood cells help protect the body from harmful substances, called antigens. In patients with an autoimmune disorder, the immune system can't tell the difference between healthy body tissue and antigens. The result is an immune response that destroys normal body tissues.

What causes the immune system to no longer tell the difference between healthy body tissues and antigens is unknown. One theory is that some microorganisms (such as bacteria or viruses) or drugs may trigger some of these changes, especially in people who have genes that make them more likely to get autoimmune disorders.

May is awareness month for several common autoimmune conditions.

Arthritis Awareness Month

Autoimmune Arthritis diseases are not the same condition often associated with the elderly. Autoimmune Arthritis diseases can include inflammation in connective and soft tissues as well as involvement in the organs. For example, many patients with Autoimmune Arthritis may suffer from costochondritis (inflammation of the connective tissues between the ribs) or from migraines (inflammation of tissues) because the core of the disease is, systemic inflammation. In addition to pain these diseases are often paired with systemic symptoms such as fever, nausea and major, debilitating fatigue. However, because "Arthritis" is inflammation of the joints, these diseases are often confused to believe they are only primary joint diseases, when in fact they are primary joint diseases that affect other areas of the body too.

<http://www.arthritis.org> or http://www.iaamovement.org/Autoimmune_Arthritis_BQVI.html

Lupus Awareness Month

Lupus is a chronic, autoimmune disease that can damage any part of the body (skin, joints, and/or organs) inside the body. Because lupus can affect so many different organs, a wide range of symptoms can occur. These symptoms may come and go, and different symptoms may appear at different times during the course of the disease. The most common symptoms, which are the same for females and males, are:

- extreme fatigue (tiredness)
- headaches
- painful or swollen joints
- fever
- anemia (low numbers of red blood cells or hemoglobin, or low total blood volume)
- swelling (edema) in feet, legs, hands, and/or around eyes
- pain in chest on deep breathing (pleurisy)
- butterfly-shaped rash across cheeks and nose
- sun- or light-sensitivity (photosensitivity)
- hair loss
- abnormal blood clotting



- fingers turning white and/or blue when cold (Raynaud's phenomenon)
- mouth or nose ulcers

<http://www.lupus.org/newsite/pages/lupus-awareness-month.html>

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0001819/>

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