COVID-19 & Lupus

Typically, your immune system works to identify and fight off bacteria and viruses. For those with lupus and other autoimmune diseases, your immune system attacks healthy tissues in your body and puts you at greater risk of developing infections such as COVID-19. The increased risk of infection also can be from the medications used to treat lupus or from the disease itself.

During the coronavirus pandemic, it’s especially important to take steps to minimize your risk of getting sick. By adding a few more habits to your daily routine, you can minimize your risk of contracting COVID-19.

Be Proactive & Stay Healthy

“Taking proactive steps to stay healthy as a lupus patient is important, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic,” says Lia McGibbon, MD, a rheumatologist at National Jewish Health.

- Avoid unnecessary travel.
- Stay in quarantine, if possible.
- Wear a cloth facemask in public areas like the grocery store.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Avoid person-to-person contact, especially with those who may be sick.
- Wash your hands regularly for at least 20 seconds with soap and water.
- Disinfect surfaces, including plastic and metal, frequently.
- Maintain your medication regimen.
- Maintain a healthy diet, get adequate sleep and continue your exercise routine.

If you are a lupus patient who has been exposed to COVID-19, you should quarantine at home for a minimum of 14 days. If you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, contact your health care provider about testing and treatment options.

"It’s extremely important that lupus patients, and other immunocompromised patients, report any COVID-19-like symptoms to their health care provider as soon as possible,” Dr. McGibbon says.

Lupus Medications and COVID-19

If you are a lupus patient taking hydroxychloroquine, you may want to refill your prescription early. Many states have made it possible to refill prescriptions that are considered necessary or lifesaving before the standard 30-day waiting period.

“As hydroxychloroquine is studied as a treatment for COVID-19, and demand for the drug becomes greater, it may be a challenge to refill your prescription,” Dr. McGibbon aid. “If you struggle to refill your prescription, reach out to your health care provider. They may be able to help you find alternative sources or ways to refill
your hydroxychloroquine prescription.”

At this time, hydroxychloroquine is not recommended as a treatment option for COVID-19.

Lupus patients, and other individuals with autoimmune diseases, need to take extra precautions during the COVID-19 pandemic to stay healthy. It may be stressful or worrisome, but the habits formed to help maintain health during this time will be beneficial now and in the future.

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