

Meet Your Lupus Nephritis Treatment Team

What does it mean to have lupus nephritis?

Lupus is an autoimmune disease that affects many parts of the body. When lupus harms the kidneys, it is called lupus nephritis. Having lupus nephritis means your immune system is attacking your kidneys and causing damage. Healthy kidneys filter extra fluid and waste out of your blood to make urine. When damaged kidneys do not work as well as they should, waste and water build up in your body. This can cause problems with your heart, lungs, blood and bones. The only way to know how well your kidneys are working is to get tested.

Damaged kidneys can cause problems to other parts of the body.



Heart



Lungs



Blood



Bones

When you have lupus nephritis, it takes a team of doctors and other professionals to manage your care.

Use this guide to learn ways to work effectively with your healthcare team.



Your treatment team



Nephrologist

Nephrologists are doctor that treat the kidneys. You may get a referral to a nephrologist when diagnosed with lupus nephritis. Kidney damage cannot be reversed but a nephrologist can help monitor your kidney function and create a plan to slow further kidney damage.

Questions to Ask:

- What were my last blood or urine test results?
- What medicines can I take to keep my kidneys from getting worse?
- What medicines should I avoid for kidney safety?



Rheumatologist

Rheumatologists are doctors that focus on conditions that affect the immune system and the muscles, joints and bones. This may be the first specialist doctor you meet with if you have lupus.

Questions to Ask:

- What could be triggering my lupus flares?
- How do I control my lupus?
- How do I treat the pain?



Primary Care Provider (PCP)

PCPs are doctors, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants that practice general medicine. PCPs may sometimes be called a "general practitioner," "family doctor" or "internist". Continue to visit your PCP for regular check-ups, general health questions, preventive care screenings and vaccines.

Questions to Ask:

- Is there anything in my health history I should be concerned about?
- How often should I have checkups?



Cardiologist

Cardiologists are doctors that focus on the heart and blood vessels. With lupus nephritis, you have a higher chance of developing heart disease. Ask for a referral to a cardiologist if you have a history of heart health issues or develop an issue with your heart.

Questions to Ask:

- What should my blood pressure be?
- How often should I check my blood pressure?
- How could lupus affect my heart?

Your treatment team



Ophthalmologist

Ophthalmologists are doctors that focus on the eyes and vision care. There are many ways lupus can cause problems with your eyes. If you are taking hydroxychloroquine, a commonly used lupus medicine, visit an ophthalmologist once a year to check your vision.

Questions to Ask:

- How is my vision?



Renal Dietitian

Renal dietitians are experts in nutrition for people with kidney disease. They can help you create a kidney-friendly meal plan that controls blood pressure and prevents further kidney damage. Ask for a referral to a dietitian if your doctor tells you that you need to limit your intake of certain nutrients or control fluid buildup.

Questions to Ask:

- What foods should I be eating?
- Do I need to change how much protein, potassium or phosphorous I am having?



Therapist, Counselor, Social Worker

These professionals are trained to provide you with emotional support. They help you manage the stress and challenges that can come with lupus nephritis. Ask your PCP or health insurance provider for a referral to mental health professionals.

Questions to Ask:

- What are strategies to help manage stress from health issues?
- What can I do when I am feeling down?

Write down other questions to ask members of your treatment team here:



For more information about lupus nephritis, visit kidneyfund.org/lupus