

## Lupus and Kidney Disease



Fictional doctor Gregory House usually suspects Lupus first as the underlying cause to his ailing patient. In his case, it's never Lupus. However, Lupus Nephritis is a very common cause of kidney disease and the [National Institute of Diabetes, Digestive and Kidney Disease \(NIDDK\)](#) has partnered with the [National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases \(NAIMS\)](#) to increase awareness of both of these related conditions as part of National Kidney Month.

Lupus is an autoimmune disease, meaning the body's immune system attacks its own cells and organs. Because of this, lupus can cause kidney disease which may get worse over time and lead to kidney failure. Symptoms of lupus are very similar to symptoms of kidney disease and many other disorders making it hard to diagnose. Common signs of lupus are:

- Red rash or color change on the face
- Painful or swollen joints
- Swollen glands
- Low blood count
- Unexplained fever

You may also develop high blood pressure, which can also cause of kidney disease. When systematic lupus causes kidney disease, this is called Lupus Nephritis. Kidney problems often start at the same time or shortly after lupus symptoms. According to NIDDK, in adults with lupus, as many as 50% will develop kidney disease. Much like chronic kidney disease, African Americans, Asian Americans and Hispanics/Latinos are more likely to develop lupus nephritis than Caucasians. The testing for lupus nephritis is the same as testing generally for chronic kidney disease. Your doctor may take blood and urine tests to measure proteins and creatinine or perform a kidney biopsy to confirm a lupus nephritis diagnosis.

The autoimmune nature of lupus, provides additional challenges to maintaining kidney function that in those with chronic kidney disease caused by diabetes or high blood pressure. In addition to diet changes, ACE inhibitors and diuretics to manage kidney disease, if you've been diagnosed as a result of lupus you may also be prescribed a corticosteroid to suppress your immune system.

Lupus is a manageable disorder if you work closely with your physicians and learn to recognize warning signs to prevent a flare. While you can't reverse lupus nephritis, managing

your kidney health once diagnosed can delay the onset of kidney failure.

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