

For the parent, friend and caregiver.....

If you are a parent, friend or a caregiver for someone with Lupus, it can be quite difficult to watch that special someone go through all these changes and life adjustments. Not only does it affect their lives, but it also affects yours. Because Lupus is the disease with 1000 faces and is not a visible ailment, it can be extremely frustrating not knowing what you are dealing with. One day a person with Lupus could be feeling completely fine and the next day it could be a nightmare you didn't expect.

Between doctors appointments and making sure your loved one is as comfortable as possible, it could be difficult to stop and think about yourself every once in a while. However, it is important for you to stay healthy as well. Here are some helpful tips to keep you healthy when taking care of someone with Lupus:

1. Take a night off. It is always important to have one or two nights for yourself during the week. Go out and enjoy a nice meal or see old friends that you would like to catch up with. Lupus patients do not always need constant round the clock care. It is okay to have some time for yourself every once in a while.

2. Eat a balanced diet. A healthy and well balanced diet is a necessity for anyone. If you have trouble with knowing how much you should be eating in every food category, go see a registered dietician or your family doctor for support. They are there to help you.

3. Stay active. It is essential that you have a regular exercise routine that you intend to stick to. Caring for a Lupus patient can involve helping the person get out of bed a lot of the time or helping them with simple everyday tasks. Take one hour out of the day to exercise. A healthy routine would consist of exercise 4-5 times per week.

Inflammatory Foods

Many people who have a chronic disease such as Lupus, often have to deal with symptoms of joint inflammation or muscle pain. It can be very frustrating having to perform day to day tasks with an extra obstacle to have to get through. One way to control the amount of inflammation from occurring could be by making small simple lifestyle changes, such as a proper healthy diet. Inflammation in both the joints and muscles could be reduced to allow for a more comfortable day to day living.

The following foods and supplements contain natural anti-inflammatory properties and should be included in the diet three to four times per week.

1. Cold-water fish

Cold-water fish offer a rich source of omega-3 essential fatty acids in the form of DHA and EPA. This type of fat contains powerful anti-inflammatory properties that have been shown to be beneficial in helping those with inflamed joints.

2. Fruits and vegetables

Fruits and vegetables are loaded with plant nutrients called phytochemicals that prevent and can even reverse the inflammatory process. When planning meals, try to include five to 10 servings of produce per day. Also, the more colourful the fruit or vegetable, the more nutrition and disease-fighting value it contains.

3. Nuts and seeds

Nuts and seeds such as almonds, walnuts and sesame seeds also contain anti-inflammatory omega-3 essential fats.

4. Fish oils

Taking a high-quality distilled fish oil has powerful anti-inflammatory effects. The omega-3 recommended dosage for adults is two grams per day.

5. Fresh, clean water

Flush your system out daily with six to eight glasses of fresh, clean water to promote proper elimination and optimal health.

Foods to avoid:

- Full-fat dairy products (cheeses, ice cream, etc.)
- Red meats (e.g., steak, ribs, hamburgers, hot dogs, pork, bacon)
- Trans fatty acids (found in processed and packaged foods)
- White flour and sugary products (cookies, cakes, sugary cereals, pop)
- Deep fried foods (doughnuts, French fries, onion rings)
- Excess alcohol

Source:

http://www.canadianliving.com/health/nutrition/the_anti_inflammatory_diet.php

http://www.canadianliving.com/health/nutrition/the_anti_inflammatory_diet_2.php

Further Information

To learn more about Lupus, symptoms, diagnosis, treatment, management, and coping with this chronic disease, contact Lupus Canada by email at info@lupuscanada.org or by calling 1-800-661-1468 to obtain our free resource Living Well with Lupus FACTS book.

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What is Lupus?

Lupus is a chronic disease characterized by inflammation in one or more parts of the body. It belongs in the family of autoimmune diseases which include rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis, juvenile diabetes, and scleroderma. The most common type of Lupus is Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE).

Systemic Lupus is a complex and sometimes baffling condition that can target any tissue or organ in the body. This includes the skin, muscles, joints, blood vessels, lungs, heart, kidneys, and the brain.

There are other types of Lupus which mainly affect the skin. A few individuals develop drug induced Lupus as a response to some medications used to treat other conditions. These symptoms disappear once the person stops taking the medication.

Symptoms of Lupus?

General statements about symptoms of Lupus can be helpful, but each person's experience will be very different.

Some people will have only a few of the many possible symptoms. Because it can target any of the body's tissues, Lupus is often hard to pin down or diagnose. That's why it is called "the disease with 1000 faces".

Before symptoms specific to Lupus occur, flu-like symptoms may appear, along with severe fatigue, a sudden unexplained loss or gain in weight, headaches, hair loss, hives, high blood pressure, or changes in the colour of fingers in the cold.

Any of the following may indicate to a doctor that Lupus is present. A person with Lupus may experience:

- Joint pain, sometimes with swelling, redness and heat
- A red rash across upper cheeks and bridge of nose
- Extreme fatigue
- An unusual reaction to sunlight
- A red scaly rash
- Small, usually painless sores inside the nose or mouth
- Chest pain, worse when lying down or inhaling
- Swelling of feet and legs, weight gain
- Seizures or severe psychological symptoms
- Abnormalities in blood chemistry which show up in blood tests

This is far from a complete list of symptoms, and the diagnosis of Lupus must be made by a doctor.

Can my Lupus be controlled?

We can deal better with the challenge of living with this or any chronic condition by learning all we can about our conditions and by being aware of how our body reacts.

Often, a person's flares follow a clear pattern, with the same combination of symptoms every time. An informed patient can watch for warning signs and alert the doctor early on. While false alarms happen, catching a flare in its early stages can make treatment easier and more effective. With this as a basis, a good working relationship with the doctor is crucial for the success of treatment.

What about treatment of Lupus?

While there is no cure yet, with treatment most people with Lupus can look forward to a normal life expectancy. The treatment plan will depend in part on the type and severity of symptoms. There are many medications that can control symptoms, from a mild anti-inflammatory to some very potent steroids. Generally, a doctor will prescribe the least powerful one, over the shortest time, that can do the job.

Steps for living a healthy Lupus Lifestyle

By simply changing some minor details and living a healthier lifestyle, Lupus flares could be better coped with should signs and symptoms occur.

Get enough sleep. Lupus patients often experience fatigue that is not usually relieved by rest. To help cope with this, get plenty of sleep at night or have a nap when needed throughout the day.

Be sun smart. Because ultraviolet light can trigger a flare, wear protective clothing, such as a hat, long-sleeved shirt and long pants, and use sunscreens with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 55 every time you go outside.

Exercise regularly. Exercise can help to recover from a flare or even help to prevent future flares from occurring or being as severe.

No smoking. Smoking can increase your risk of cardiovascular disease and can worsen the effects of Lupus on your heart and blood vessels.

Eat a healthy balanced diet. A healthy diet can benefit you in all aspects of your health. Some dietary restrictions may occur due to allergies, high blood pressure or if you are at risk for kidney damage or gastrointestinal problems.

Coping Mechanisms and Support. During the beginning stages of your diagnosis and throughout your life can cause you to have an array of feelings about your condition ranging from fear to frustration. It can increase your risk of depression and related mental health problems. It is always good to have coping mechanisms and a good support system to help deal with these issues.

Educate Yourself. Write down all your questions that you have for your doctor and ask them at your next appointment. The more you know about Lupus, the more confident you'll feel in your treatment choices.

Get support from your friends and family. By talking about Lupus with your family and friends, they can help you when you are experiencing a flare. Lupus is not only hard on you, but also your loved ones because they usually can't see it and you may not appear sick. They can't tell if you're having a good day or a bad day unless you tell them.

Have some personal time. Cope with stress in your life by taking time for yourself. Use that time to read, meditate, listen to music or write in a journal. Find activities that calm and renew you.

Talk to others who have Lupus. You can connect with others who have Lupus through support groups or online message boards. Other people with Lupus can offer unique support because they are facing many of the same obstacles and frustrations that you are facing.