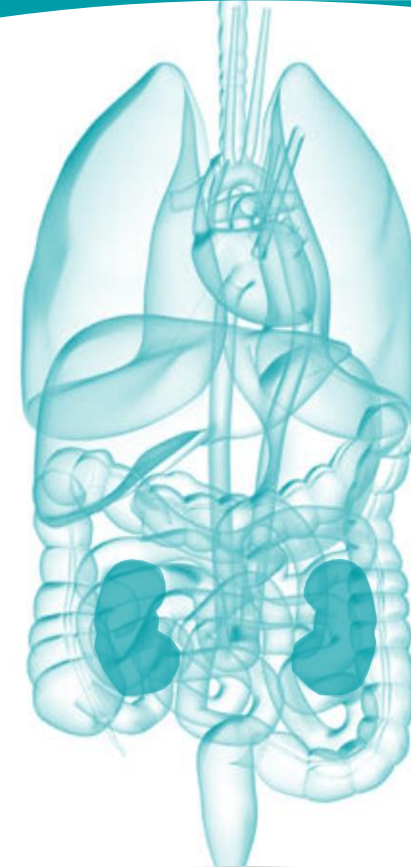


DEPARTMENT OF RENAL MEDICINE

# All you need to know about Lupus Nephritis



Diabetes & Metabolism Centre  
Level 4  
17 Third Hospital Avenue  
Singapore 168752  
[www.sgh.com.sg](http://www.sgh.com.sg)  
General Enquiries: 6222 3322  
Appointments: 6321 4377

Reg. No: 198703907Z  
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## What is lupus nephritis?

Lupus nephritis is an inflammation of the kidney caused by systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE or commonly known as lupus), an autoimmune disease in which the body's immune system attacks its own cells. Lupus can also affect other parts of the body such as the skin, joints, blood, brain, heart and lungs.

Lupus nephritis can result in blood or protein in the urine and can lead to kidney dysfunction. When the kidneys are not working well, waste and fluids are not removed from the blood, leading to accumulation of waste products, high blood pressure and fluid retention. Dialysis may be needed if the condition is left untreated.

## What causes it?

Lupus nephritis occurs when systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) affects the kidney, but the underlying cause of SLE is not known, although genetics and environmental exposures may contribute.

## What are the symptoms?

Symptoms vary, depending on the severity of the kidney inflammation. Patients may have high blood pressure, frothy or reddish urine or swelling in the feet, ankles, hands or face. If lupus nephritis is not diagnosed or treated, the kidneys will be permanently scarred with irreversible loss of function. Complete loss of kidney function is known as end-stage renal disease.

Patients with lupus nephritis may have other lupus symptoms such as joint pain or swelling, rashes on the face or the trunk and fever.

## Who are affected?

Men and women of all ages may develop lupus nephritis, although lupus is most commonly diagnosed among women 20 to 40 years old.

## How is it diagnosed?

Blood and urine tests can indicate the presence of lupus nephritis, but a kidney biopsy is required to confirm the diagnosis and assess the severity of kidney inflammation. A kidney biopsy involves obtaining a small piece of kidney tissue for examination under a microscope.

## How is it treated?

Treatment depends on the degree of acute inflammation and chronic scarring, but usually involves medications to stop the immune system from attacking kidney cells. Common medications used include prednisolone, cyclophosphamide, mycophenolate mofetil or mycophenolate sodium and hydroxychloroquine.

Patients with high blood pressure or swelling may be given medications to lower blood pressure or remove excessive fluid. They will also be advised to eat less salt.

Treatment usually helps to control kidney inflammation. However, it is essential for patients to visit their doctor regularly, as the disease tends to "flare up" in up to two-thirds of patients and up to 10% of patients may not respond to therapy and develop end-stage renal disease. These patients will need dialysis or a kidney transplant within five years.

## How will lupus nephritis affect my lifestyle?

Patients should stay out of the sun or take precautions such as wear sunscreen or protective clothing to prevent lupus relapses.