

Patient-physician dialog tool

Talking to your healthcare professional

Diagnosing lupus can be difficult. It can take time for doctors and other healthcare professionals to piece together the symptoms to diagnose this complex disease. Making a correct diagnosis of lupus requires good communication between you and your healthcare professional.

How a diagnosis is made

If you are experiencing common signs and symptoms of lupus, it is important that you take action. Only a medical professional can make a diagnosis of lupus.

- First, telling a health professional about your symptoms and other problems you have had can help him or her understand what you are experiencing. Your history can provide clues to your disease, for example if anyone in your family has had lupus. Share the lupus checklist you have completed with your health professional.
- You will be examined for rashes and other signs that something is wrong.
- Laboratory tests of blood and urine, for example, may be taken to see how your immune system is working.¹

List symptoms you experienced, the date you experienced the symptom, describe what you experienced, and make note of anything you think may have triggered the symptom. Take this tracking sheet with you to all your medical appointments. Tracking your symptoms over time can help you and your doctor manage your symptoms.

DATE	SYMPTOMS	NOTES (TRIGGERS, TIME OF DAY, ETC.)

1 Reference: National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases Website. Living With Lupus: Health Information Basics for You and Your Family. http://www.niams.nih.gov/health_info/lupus/living_with_lupus.asp. Accessed August 27, 2015. This project was supported by Grant Number 6 MPCMP081013-05-01 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health (HHS, OMH) in partnership with the Office on Women's Health (OWH) and Office of the Surgeon General (OSG). Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the HHS, OMH.

HANDOUT 4.1

What to ask your healthcare professional

Don't be afraid to ask questions, no matter how sensitive. Make a list for questions you may have for your medical provider.

Here are some questions you may consider asking:

Diagnosis and treatment

- Could my condition be related to anything else, like medications or allergies?
- Is there a way for us to know how serious my lupus will get?
- Are there additional medical or healthcare specialists I should see?

Other treatments/activities

- Besides the medicines you prescribe for me, should I take vitamins or supplements?
- Are there any additional activities, like exercise or yoga I should take part in that may help my condition?
- Is it okay to receive vaccinations?

Lifestyle considerations

- How do I tell my family and friends about my condition?
- How much information about my condition do I tell my employer?