



Lupus and Native American Communities

Lupus is a disease that can affect your whole body. And unfortunately, people from Native American and Alaska Native communities have a higher risk of getting lupus and having complications because of it.

| What is lupus?

Lupus is a chronic (long-term) disease that can cause inflammation and pain in any part of your body. It's an autoimmune disease, which means that your immune system — the body system that usually fights infections — attacks healthy tissue instead. Inflammation from lupus can cause permanent damage to internal organs, such as the kidneys.

When people talk about lupus, they usually mean **systemic lupus erythematosus**, the most common kind. Lupus can affect many parts of the body, but some common symptoms are:

- Extreme fatigue (feeling very tired)
- Pain or swelling in your joints
- Headaches
- Sensitivity to sunlight or fluorescent light
- Skin rashes and hair loss

Native Americans and Alaska Natives are more likely to get lupus. Know the symptoms to look out for — and tell people in your community about the warning signs of lupus. If you think you or someone you know might have lupus, make sure to talk to a doctor.

Help Us Solve
The Cruel Mystery
LU?PUS
FOUNDATION OF AMERICA



Social determinants of health (SDOH)

are the conditions in the places where you're born, grow, work, live, and age — and they can impact your health in a lot of different ways. Some examples are historical trauma, poverty, and lack of access to health insurance, health care and nutritious foods.

In the United States, SDOH partly explain why:

- Native Americans and Alaska Natives are more likely to have lupus than any other group in the United States
- Native Americans and Alaska Natives are more likely to have organ damage than White people
- Native Americans and Alaska Natives face many barriers to being diagnosed and treated for lupus

| What causes lupus?

No one knows what causes lupus, but it is likely a complex interaction between a person's genes, hormones and environmental triggers. An environmental trigger is something outside the body that can bring on symptoms of lupus or make them worse. Prolonged exposure to silica dust or ultraviolet light can be environmental triggers, but so can intense stress or long-term lack of sleep.

| What should I do if I think I have lupus?

Talk to your doctor about your concerns. There is no single test that can diagnose lupus. Your doctor will likely review your symptoms and medical history along with your family medical history, conduct a physical exam and order some lab tests.

Your doctor may also refer you to rheumatologist, a doctor who specializes in treating autoimmune diseases like lupus.

There is no cure for lupus right now, but there are treatments that can help control your symptoms and protect your organs from damage.

You can take our *Could It Be Lupus?* quiz at [Lupus.org/resources/could-it-be-lupus](https://lupus.org/resources/could-it-be-lupus)

| Where can I learn more?

You can learn more about how lupus is diagnosed and treated as well as strategies for living better with lupus by visiting the Lupus Foundation of America website at [Lupus.org](https://lupus.org).

You can also contact one of our health education specialists for tailored non-medical advice, answers and support at [Lupus.org/HealthEducator](https://lupus.org/HealthEducator).



Scan the QR code to learn more about our programs and services for people living with lupus.

NATIONAL

**Resource Center
on Lupus ■**

by **Lupus Foundation of America**

For more information about coping with lupus, please visit the **National Resource Center on Lupus** at:

[Lupus.org/Resources](https://lupus.org/Resources)