



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE
OFFICE OF HEALTH SERVICES

**EMPLOYEE HEALTH UPDATE:
LUPUS AWARENESS MONTH**



According to the [Lupus Foundation of America](#), about 1.5 million Americans have lupus. The disease most commonly strikes young women between the age of 15 and 45. [Lupus](#) affects about 10 times more women than men. The disease is more common among certain ethnic groups including African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans. [Lupus symptoms](#) can include [joint pain](#), fever, [fatigue](#), rashes and serious systemic effects which may be disabling or life-threatening.

Lupus is an autoimmune disease that can affect various parts of the body, including the skin, joints, heart, lungs, blood, kidneys, and brain. Normally the body's immune system makes proteins called antibodies, to protect the body against viruses, bacteria, and other foreign materials. These foreign materials are called antigens.

In an autoimmune disorder like lupus, the immune system cannot tell the difference between foreign substances and its own cells and tissues. The immune system then makes antibodies directed against itself. These antibodies -- called "auto-antibodies" (auto means 'self') -- cause inflammation, pain, and damage in various parts of the body.

Inflammation is considered the primary feature of lupus. Inflammation, which in Latin means "set on fire," is characterized by pain, heat, redness, swelling and loss of function, either on the inside or on the outside of the body (or both).

For most people, lupus is a mild disease affecting only a few organs. For others, it may cause serious and even life-threatening problems. Although epidemiological data on lupus is limited, studies suggest that more than 16,000 Americans develop lupus each year.

[Lupus: An Online Tutorial](#)

The National Library of Medicine has created an excellent online tutorial, which provides a comprehensive overview of the disease, symptoms, health effects, and treatments.

To view it, click on the link for [English](#) or [Spanish](#).

[Lupus: Frequently Asked Questions](#)

The Lupus Foundation of America Web site contains a wealth of information about all aspects of lupus. For your convenience, provided below is a list of links to the most frequently asked questions.

- [What is Lupus?](#)
- [Lupus of the Skin](#)
- [Drug Induced Lupus](#)
- [Cause of Lupus](#)
- [Diagnosis](#)
- [Living with Lupus](#)
- [Treatment](#)
- [Complementary and Alternative Medicine Therapies](#)
- [Research](#)
- [Work and Disability](#)
- [Insurance and Financial Aid](#)

Sources for this article: [Lupus Foundation of America](#); [National Library of Medicine](#); [About.com](#)