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Spotting the Signs: Lupus Symptoms in Black Individuals

This resource highlights the unique signs and symptoms of lupus in Black individuals, offering insights to aid early recognition and prompt care.



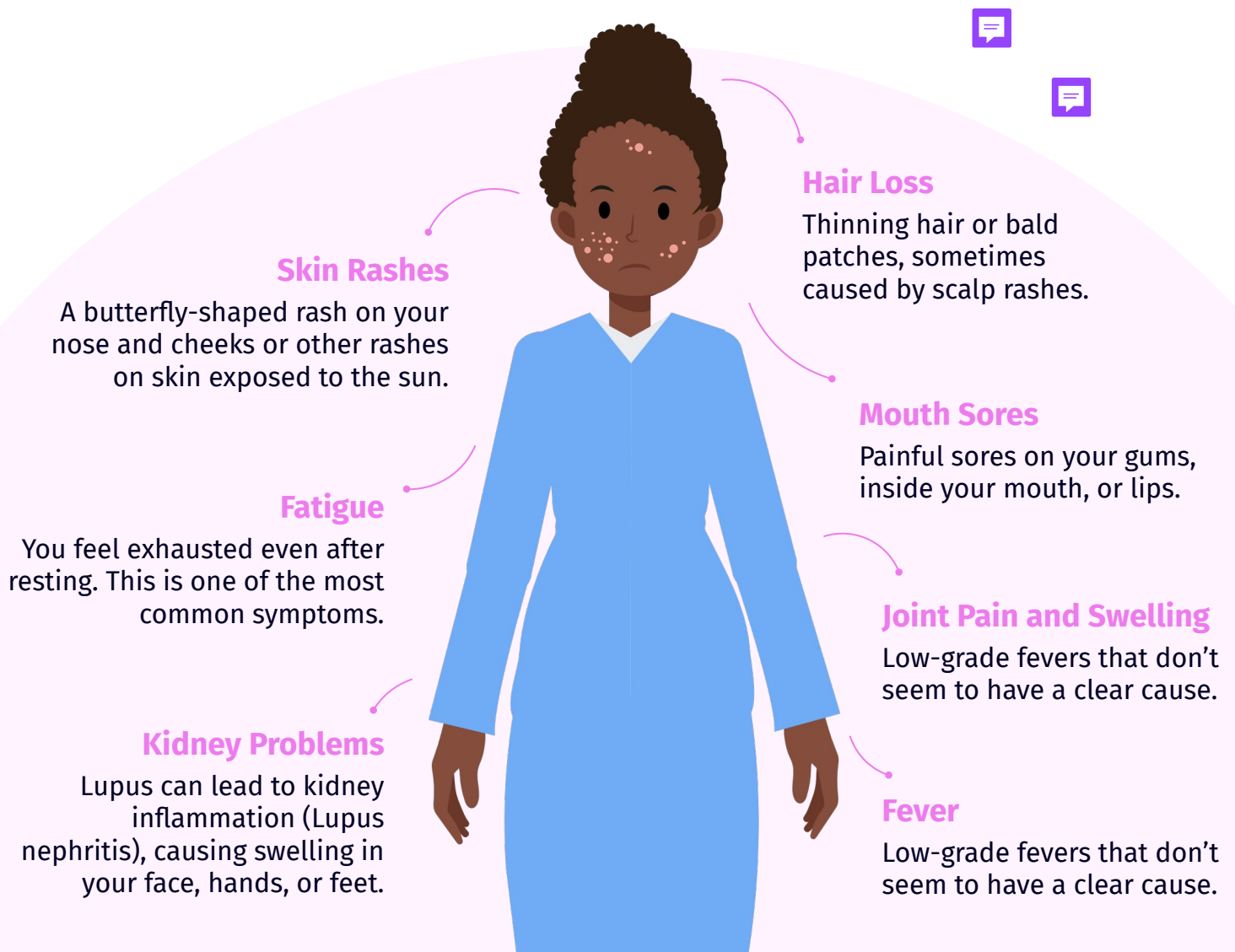


Understanding Lupus and How it Affects Black People

Lupus can be hard to catch early because its symptoms can be similar to other illnesses. For Black people, lupus can show up differently, which makes it even harder to diagnose. This is especially important because Black women are more likely to be diagnosed at a younger age and have more serious symptoms than any other group.

Common Lupus Symptoms

Lupus symptoms can range from mild to severe. Here are the most common ones to look out for:



Symptoms That Often Get Missed

Because lupus symptoms can look like other illnesses, some warning signs get overlooked. Below are some commonly overlooked symptoms:



Chest Pain

Pain when breathing deeply often related to lung inflammation.



Raynaud's Phenomenon

Poor circulation, causing fingers and toes to turn white or blue in cold weather.



Unexplained Weight Changes

Sudden weight changes can sometimes be linked to kidney or thyroid issues.



Frequent Infections

Lupus affects the immune system, making you more likely to get sick.



Memory and Focus Problems

Trouble concentrating, forgetfulness, or confusion.

When Do Lupus Symptoms Appear

Lupus symptoms can show up slowly or quickly. They may appear when you're under a lot of physical or emotional stress. Black women often get **diagnosed with the disease when they're between ages 15 and 44**, but early signs like fatigue or joint pain can show up even in childhood.



Early Signs to Watch For

Feel very tired, joint pain, and rashes are usually the first signs. These may come and go, making it harder to link them to lupus early on.

Flare-Ups

Lupus tends to flare up in cycles, where symptoms worsen temporarily (flare) and then improve.



How to Track Your Symptoms

Tracking your symptoms can help doctors diagnose lupus sooner. Here are some tips on how to monitor changes:



Keep a Symptom Journal

Write down any new or worsening symptoms, noting how long they last and how severe they are.



Look for Patterns

Pay attention to symptoms that get worse after being in the sun, during stressful times, or after an illness.

When to See a Doctor

- 1 You have new or worsening fatigue, joint pain, or rashes.
- 2 You keep getting low-grade fevers without explanation.
- 3 You notice swelling in the face, hands, or feet, which could signal kidney problems.



Doctors Who Can Help

Once you start to notice symptoms, it is important to talk to the right healthcare providers.

Dermatologist

For skin-related symptoms like the butterfly rash, a dermatologist can provide treatments to manage flare-ups.

Rheumatologist

A specialist in autoimmune diseases like lupus. They are key in managing lupus diagnosis and treatment.

Nephrologist

A kidney doctor for lupus-related kidney problems like swelling in the legs, hands, and face.

Primary Care Physician

They can check your symptoms and run basic tests.

Neurologist

If you experience memory problems or frequent headaches, a neurologist may be needed to assess how lupus is affecting the brain.



Take Action Early

It's important to know the signs of lupus early so you can get diagnosed and treated quickly. By understanding the common symptoms, tracking changes in your body, and knowing when to see a doctor, you can take charge of your health and catch lupus early. Unfortunately, sometimes we're not always heard. Speaking up about your concerns can lead to earlier interventions and better health outcomes. Being your own advocate ensures you receive the care and support you need to manage lupus effectively.

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