

Lupus and Your Emotions

Lupus is a chronic (long-term) illness. People with chronic illness often feel sad, depressed, and sometimes nervous or worried. Emotions can affect not only your mind, but also your body. Talk to your doctor about how you are feeling – physically and emotionally.

How do I know if I have depression?

Everyone feels sad from time to time. But if you have a sudden, major life change – like lupus - you may be more than just sad. You may be depressed. And that's OK. Your doctor can help. If you are depressed you may feel:

- Sad all day, just about every day
- Hopeless, like things just aren't going to change or get better
- Cranky or irritable
- Helpless or worthless, maybe even like it's all your fault some how
- Like not doing the things you usually like to do

You may be sleeping too much or too little. Your desire for food may have changed, too.

If you're worried you might hurt yourself or someone else, get medical help as soon as possible.

Go to the emergency room or call 911.

If you have depression, there are many ways to treat it. Some treatments do not require medicine. With treatment, your mood will improve. And so will your energy, your concentration, and your lupus.

What if I feel nervous or anxious?

When your doctor first says you have lupus, it can make you nervous or anxious. After you learn how to take care of yourself, feelings of frustration, anger, and sadness usually get better.

Anxiety is what we feel when we are worrying about some future event. We expect something bad might happen. This feeling usually comes on slowly.

If you are nervous or anxious, you may feel like:

- There is a knot in your stomach or your stomach is upset a lot.
- Your muscles seem tight or stiff.
- You get a lot of headaches.
- You're "on edge" a lot of the time.

If your nervousness or anxiety continues once you are well underway with your lupus treatment, talk to your doctor.

What is a panic attack?

A panic attack is different. You suddenly feel very afraid because of something you think is happening right now. Stress can cause a panic attack. Tell your doctor if you have signs like these:

- Feeling very afraid, as if you're in danger, when you aren't
- Fast heartbeat which may feel like your heart is pounding
- Breathing fast but still feeling short of breath
- Pain in the chest or tightness in the throat
- Feeling lightheaded or dizzy
- Numbness or tingling in your hands or face
- Feeling hot or cold and maybe sweating
- Feeling sick to your stomach and maybe having cramps in your belly

Panic attacks are very uncomfortable. They are not life-threatening. But panic attacks are hard to manage on your own. They may get worse without treatment.

Signs of a panic attack can also look like signs of other serious health problems, like a heart attack. Contact your doctor as soon as possible.

What's the doctor's phone number? (585) 486-0901