

# YOUR Oral Health & Lupus

*With gum disease increasingly common, it's important to understand the impact it can have on chronic illnesses, such as lupus.*



Most people know that lupus is an autoimmune disease that requires special treatment.

Lupus begins to develop when the body's immune system can't determine the difference between good and bad bacteria. As a result, it produces antibodies that attack good cells and healthy tissue instead of foreign viruses or bacteria.

Lupus has a range of symptoms that can appear in many areas of the body, including the mouth. The most common symptoms include fever, joint pain, skin rashes, and fatigue. Hair loss, sensitivity to light, chest pain, and ulcers on the nose or mouth are also possible.

If you have lupus, you might also experience blood clots, headaches, anemia, and swelling around the limbs or eyes. The symptoms can range from mild



to severe. Studies show that people with lupus have a greater risk of developing mouth ulcers, infection, and periodontal (gum) disease.

Oral health complications with lupus can include:

- Red and white sores, usually painless, on lips, gums and roof of the mouth.
- Dry mouth. People who have dry mouth for an extended period of time have an increased risk for cavities and gum disease because saliva plays an important role in fighting these issues.
- Sjogren's syndrome, a disorder of your immune system identified by its two most

common symptoms — dry eyes and a dry mouth.

- Thrush (yeast infection)
- Cracked lips
- Lichen planus, an inflammatory skin condition

Given these potential conditions, practice good oral hygiene habits. Lupus patients should tell their dentists about their condition and arrange for the dentist and their physician to communicate together about treatments. It's great to have your dentist and physician work together as a team. Lupus patients should maintain a regular schedule for professional dental care, and the dentist might

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recommend more frequent dental visits.

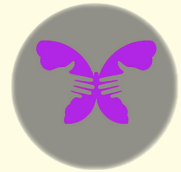
More oral health tips:

- Stay hydrated. Drink plenty of fluids. For dry mouth, ask your dentist about a saliva substitute or oral rinse. The dentist may recommend a fluoride rinse, too.
- Brush at least twice daily with a soft-bristled toothbrush.
- Floss daily. Your dentist may recommend following flossing with an antimicrobial mouth wash to kill bacteria and fungi.
- Avoid foods that are hot, spicy or acidic to avoid irritating mouth sores.
- If you have an ultraviolet light (UV) sensitivity, wear a lip balm with SPF protection.

Talk to your dentist to get specific recommendations for

## Did you know?

- The Lupus Foundation of America estimates that 1.5 million Americans, and at least **five million people worldwide**, have lupus.
- Lupus strikes mostly **women of childbearing age**. However, men, children, and teenagers develop lupus, too. In the U.S., 90% of individuals living with lupus are women. Most people with lupus develop the disease between the ages of 15-44.
- **People with lupus can experience significant symptoms**, such as pain, extreme fatigue, hair loss, gum disease cognitive issues, and physical impairments that affect every facet of their lives.
- Some lupus patients may suffer from cardiovascular disease, strokes, disfiguring rashes, and painful joints. For others, there may be no visible symptoms.



Source: Lupus Foundation ([lupus.org](http://lupus.org))

your individual diagnosis and treatment plan. 🦷

FYI: More information can be found at the TRICARE Dental Program's (TDP) Dental Health Center ([uccitdp.com](http://uccitdp.com)); the Academy of General Dentistry ([agd.org](http://agd.org)); the American Dental Association ([ada.org](http://ada.org)); and The Lupus Foundation of America ([lupus.org](http://lupus.org)).

## Fact sheets in United Concordia's oral health series:



• Fluoride & Your Oral Health



• Oral Health: Infant to Teen



• Oral Health & Your Overall Wellness



• Oral Health for Kids with Special Needs



• Preventive Oral Care for Everyone



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