# Fun Summer Month Activities with Lupus

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## Summer Activities for Lupus

Summer is officially here and for most people, summertime means outdoor fun. Just because you have lupus, doesn't mean enjoying summer is out of the question.

### Why is Summer Hard for People with Lupus?

Summertime is difficult for people with lupus because most are photosensitive, meaning they experience negative reactions from being out in sunlight. Up to 83 percent of people with lupus are ultraviolet (UV) sensitive to either sunlight or fluorescent lights or both according to one report published in the *British Journal of Dermatology*.

You may experience a lupus flare after being exposed to UV rays. It is also possible you may develop a butterfly rash over your nose and cheeks after UV light exposure. You may develop other rashes resembling hives or other symptoms of a lupus flare including joint pain, fatigue, fever, or inflammation of an organ.

Many lupus patients also have secondary Sjogren's syndrome which may cause dryness of eyes, mouth, and skin. It can be harder to manage Sjogren's in the summer months so it's important to stay hydrated and use eye drops frequently.

Lastly, be aware that some of the medications you take to treat lupus can increase your susceptibility to the sun's effects. Ask your doctor if any of your medications will affect you during the summer months and what precautions you should take.

### Lupus Friendly Summertime Activities

Summertime fun is usually outdoor fun which feels like a harsh reality for those who shun the sun due to health conditions. Don't lose hope during summertime as there are plenty of fun activities you can still do.

Some of these activities are indoor but there are few outdoor options, as well.

#### Museums

Museums are a great way to have fun and stay cool during the summer months. Some museums do have outdoor activities if you want to sneak out for a short period.

#### Swimming Alternatives

You may think you cannot go swimming during summertime with lupus but you have plenty of alternatives to outdoor pools and beaches. Indoor pools, sports complexes, and recreation centers are all indoor swimming options and may offer additional services such as saunas, fitness centers, batting cages, children's areas, and

even childcare.

**Movies**

Your local movie theater may offer comfortable seating and is air-conditioned, offering a great way to spend a summer afternoon. Some communities host movies in the evening when it is cooler and dark which is much easier on your body, keeping lupus symptoms at bay.

**Your Local Mall**

Retail therapy will not only provide stress relief but it will also protect you from the sun's rays. Walking around your local mall is good exercise too.

**Evening walks**

An evening walk keeps you moving and won't affect you in the same way a walk during the day would. A good time for a walk is after dinner once you have eaten the biggest meal of day.

**Take a scenic drive**

Blast your car's air conditioner and favorite music and enjoy the scenery.

**Dinner outside**

Make reservations at your favorite restaurant and enjoy dinner on the deck. Or better yet, go for a picnic after dark and don't forget the mosquito repellent.

**Take Precautions when Outdoors During Daylight Hours**

If you need to be outdoors during the summer months, make sure you take special precautions.

Avoid midday sun from around 10 am to about 4 pm. Even if it is cloudy outside, don't be fooled into thinking you will not be exposed to UV rays.

Wear sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30 that blocks UVB and UVA rays. Make sure you put on at least one ounce of sunscreen all over your body, including on the back of your neck and ears. Keep reapplying because sweating, swimming, and your clothing all remove sunscreen.

You should wear light clothing to cover your skin and keep you cooler. Get yourself a wide-brimmed hat to help protect your head, face, and neck.

Hydrate. Since you are more vulnerable to dehydration and heat stroke, it is essential to stay hydrated. Make sure you are drinking 8 to 10 glasses of water daily and avoid sodas and caffeine especially when you going out.

Buy a cooling blanket. If you find need to attend an important outdoor event, a cooling blanket can help cool your skin and minimize the sun's effect.

It is still possible to enjoy summertime with lupus but you need to be smart about what you are doing. The reality is everyone can benefit from staying safe on the hottest days of summer, not just those suffering from lupus.