The Lupus “Butterfly” Facial Rash: A Signature Effect of Lupus

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What Does a Lupus Rash Look Like?

Lupus is a significant physical health condition that tricks the body’s immune defense into attacking its own systems and organs. Although the condition can influence most parts of the body, including joints, kidneys, blood, brain, heart and lungs, one of the most common effects of lupus is its signature “butterfly rash” that presents on the person’s face. What does a lupus rash look like? You’ll soon find out.

Along with other signs and symptoms of lupus, it is important to gain new understanding of the butterfly rash to quickly and effectively identify the condition and seek treatment. Here’s everything you need to know about lupus and its butterfly rash.

Building a Better Understanding of Lupus

Lupus is an autoimmune disease that systematically harms the body over time. Like other autoimmune issues, lupus causes a reaction that leads the body to treat normal, healthy cells as foreign bodies that must be eliminated. During this process, most major systems in the body can be affected, causing damage to various tissue and organs.

Diagnosing Lupus

A major challenge with lupus is the difficulty of diagnosis. With lupus, no two people have the exact same series of symptoms. One person may have a set of many symptoms that develops slowly over the course of years, while another person could have just a few symptoms that emerge and progress quickly.

What Are the Common Symptoms?

Some of the most common lupus symptoms:

- Fatigue with low energy
- Sudden and unexplained fevers
- Pain, stiffness and swelling in the joints
- Skin lesions that are caused by or made worse from exposure to the sun
- Raynaud’s syndrome, a condition where fingers and toes turn white or blue and become numb or painful in the cold
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pains
- Dry eyes
- Headaches
- Periods of confusion and memory loss

A Balancing Act

As mentioned, these symptoms will not point directly to lupus for most people. Because of this, people who think they could have lupus should monitor and track their symptoms to better communicate their symptoms to medical professionals.

The Butterfly Rash – A Trademark of Lupus

Though symptoms like fatigue, fever, shortness of breath and chest pain could be related to a host of other physical health complications, lupus does have a tell-tale symptom. The butterfly rash gives a clear indication that a person could have lupus. Anyone noting a new rash should seek medical treatment quickly.

What Is the Butterfly Rash and What Does a Lupus Rash Look Like?

The butterfly rash is a distinctive red mark across the face from ear to ear. The rash typically covers the checks and spans the bridge of the nose. Most commonly, the forehead, upper lip, chin and jaw line will not display any redness.

The butterfly rash is not usually painful, itchy, or otherwise uncomfortable. It may become embarrassing or distressing from a self-esteem point of view because it can stand out to others. The rashes will be very temporary for some and long-term for others. Some may have it only once, while others will notice the rash multiple times. If it becomes a major source of anxiety, check out our video on how to cover a butterfly rash.

Addressing the Physical Impact of Lupus

Lupus is a physical health disease that requires medical treatment to address and minimize the effects. Since lupus has so many symptoms and presentations, there is not one unified treatment plan for the condition. Instead, there are many treatment options:

- Anti-inflammatory drugs
- Antimalarial drugs
- Corticosteroids
- Immunosuppressants
- Other medications

Whatever the course of action, it is necessary to discuss and plan your treatment with a medical professional. Taking it upon yourself to start a regimen of over-the-counter medication could do more harm than good.

Addressing the Mental Health Impact of Lupus

It is true that lupus is a physical health condition, but how a person feels physically has a tremendous impact on how they feel mentally. This case is especially true with an illness like lupus that offers a wide range of confusing and confounding symptoms.

If you are experiencing lupus symptoms or have received a lupus diagnosis, working on your mental health can help restore some order and control over the way you feel. To better manage the mental health side of lupus:

- **Identify the emotional influence.** Every condition has some unwanted influence on your mental health. What role does lupus play in your life? To know where you want to go, you first have to understand where you are. Spend time thinking of the emotional impact and write down your feelings.
- **Stay connected.** Whether the condition is mental or physical, there is the tendency to feel isolated from family and loved ones. Don’t disconnect and instead reach out to others more often.
- **Avoid the negatives.** Negative coping skills always seem appealing because they offer quick fixes to long-term problems. Drinking alcohol, doing drugs and engaging in other unhealthy behaviors only makes things worse.

- **Follow through with the professional recommendations.** It may be frustrating to continue taking medications or sticking to treatments that do not seem to work. Stay the course, though. Only by maintaining your treatment plan can you and your doctor know what works and what does not.

Lupus is a complex condition and a butterfly rash is something that can cause some self-esteem issues. To best address the issue, take an approach that balances your mental health with your physical health.