

LOOP TO LUPUS

Pop music sensation Selena Gomez recently revealed that she was suffering from a disease called Lupus — and it's been all over the news ever since. But, do you know enough about it? Pooja Salvi & Katha Nauriyal help you out

Before we explain what causes lupus and how you can treat it, you should know what the disease is all about. "Lupus is a chronic, autoimmune disease that can damage any part of your body, from your skin and joints to your organs," Dr. Neena Chitnis, a consultant rheumatologist at Wockhardt Hospital explains. Chronic, in simple words, means that the signs and symptoms last longer than six weeks and often even for several years.

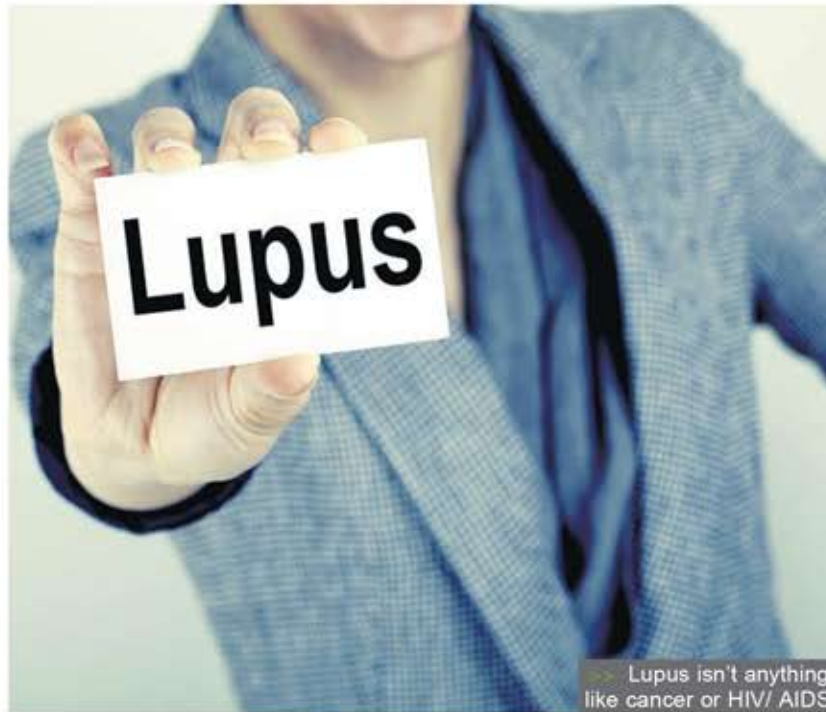
"Systemic lupus erythematosus, or SLE, is the most common form of lupus," says Dr. Neena. Systemic lupus is a disease that can affect several parts of your body. Lupus is a disease in which symptoms get worse (flare up) on occasions, but signs also disappear (remission) for periods of time.

But, what does this mean?

When you're diagnosed with lupus, it means that something is wrong with your immune system. This is the part of your body that fights off viruses, bacteria and germs. Your immune system usually produces proteins called antibodies, which protect your body from foreign invaders. When you have lupus, your immune system cannot tell the difference between these foreign invaders and your body's healthy tissue and creates auto-antibodies that attack and destroy healthy tissue. These auto-antibodies cause inflammation and pain, and can damage various parts of your body. "Lupus is a chronic disease like diabetes and thyroid problems, in which your body's defence mechanism begins to attack your system. This reaction is caused by specific microscopic particles called antibodies, which cause an inflammation that affects several different body systems," says Dr. Mohan Thomas, a consultant cosmetic surgeon at Breach Candy Hospital.

How do I know if I have lupus?

If you have lupus, you may have symptoms such as fatigue, muscle aches and joint pain. More severe symptoms such as exhaustion, weight loss, fever and anaemia can occur during periods of a flare up and may require treatment with steroid medication. "Lupus can cause several skin reactions that are similar to other, more common skin disorders, which makes diagnosing the illness challenging in many cases. For instance, even the butterfly rash may be mistaken for psoriasis. delay in the right diagnosis, because people initially improve with topical treatments. The skin diseases that are caused by lupus can lead to rashes or sores, most of which will appear on sun-exposed areas such as your face, ears, neck, arms and legs," Dr. Mohan adds.



Lupus isn't anything like cancer or HIV/ AIDS

What causes a lupus flare?

When you are affected by lupus, and other autoimmune diseases, your immune system works against the normal cells and tissues in your body. Anything that triggers your immune system can cause a lupus flare. Triggers may include:

- **Ultraviolet light** UV light is a common trigger for a lupus flare. Exposure to the sun typically causes a lupus rash, but it may also activate more severe systemic symptoms of lupus.
- **Infections** Any type of infection can stimulate the immune system. This may result in a flare.
- **Stress** This can be emotional or physical. Flares are also common after physical trauma, surgery or emotional events.
- **Pregnancy** Flares are common during pregnancy and also, during the postnatal period.
- **New medication** Certain drugs such as sulphonamide antibiotics, over-the-counter herbal drugs and Echinacea can trigger these flares.
- **Stopping a drug** Talk to your doctor before you begin or stop any medication.

The cure

"Lupus can be treated with medicines, and treatment depends on the severity of the disease and its symptoms. The cornerstone of treatment remains steroids. The treatment plan aims to prevent and treat flares, reducing organ damage and other recurring problems. A few medicines used for cancer treatment can also be used for

patients who suffer from lupus, with a difference in dosages," Dr. Nenna adds.

What about chemo?

"Chemotherapy basically included medical drugs that kill certain cell lines in the body. They are usually used to treat cancer wherein large doses of these drugs help in killing the cancer cells. Chemotherapy is not the first line of treatment and is used only when important body structures are involved. This reduces the highly active immune response and helps to bring about a long term remission of lupus," Dr. Mohan tells us.

YOU SHOULD KNOW...

- Lupus is not contagious, even through sexual contact.
- Lupus is not like or related to cancer in any way. Cancer is a condition of malignant, abnormal tissues that grow rapidly and spread into surrounding tissues, while lupus is an autoimmune disease. However, some treatments for lupus may include immunosuppressant drugs that are also used in certain kinds of chemotherapy.
- Lupus is not like or related to HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) or AIDS. In HIV or AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) the immune system is underactive; in Lupus, the immune system is overactive.
- Lupus can range from mild to life threatening and should be treated by a doctor. With good medical care, most people with lupus can lead a normal life.



« KNOW MORE HOME REMEDIES TO CURE A STUFFY NOSE

Having a blocked nose can get quite uncomfortable and unfortunately, there is no sure shot way to treat it. Yamini Walia suggests a few home remedies that can help you unblock a stuffy nose

Your nose begins to drip, you sound funny and you find it difficult to breathe — all these symptoms make having a stuffy nose extremely annoying. Several people think that having a stuffy nose is the result of the build-up of mucus in your nasal passages, but it is actually caused by inflamed blood vessels in your sinuses. These irritated blood vessels usually strike after a cold, flu, allergies or a sinus infection. Here, we suggest some home remedies that will help you breathe free.

A steamy shower

A hot, steamy shower is highly effective when you want to unblock a stuffy nose. The steam from the hot shower helps to thin out the mucus in your nose and sinuses and reduces inflammation. As a result, your breathing returns to normal, at least for a short period.

Stay hydrated

Drink a lot of water when you have a stuffy nose. Liquids such as water, sports drinks, tea, soup and even juice will keep you hydrated when you're sick. They help thin out the mucus in your nasal passages, which decreases the pressure on your sinuses and pushes the fluids out of your nose. Less pressure means less inflammation and irritation.

A warm compress

Soak a towel in warm water. Squeeze the water out, fold it and place it over your face, especially around your nose and on your forehead. The heat can provide comfort from pain and the warmth will relieve some of the inflammation in your nasal passages.

Use a humidifier

Humidifiers help break up congestion by adding moisture to the air, which helps to thin out the mucus in your nose. Make sure that you keep your humidifier clean in order to prevent the growth of any kind of bacteria and mould. Use a cool-mist humidifier for children to avoid accidental burns from warm mist.



>> It's important to stay properly hydrated when you have a stuffy nose