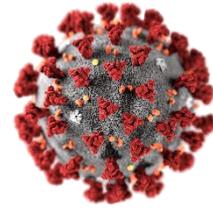# Lupus and Coronavirus (Covid-19)

## What is Lupus:

Lupus is a chronic disease that can cause inflammation and pain in any part of your body. It is an autoimmune disease in which your body attacks itself. It most commonly affects your joints, skin, kidneys, heart, lungs and may affect other internal organs.  When lupus makes the immune system attack healthy tissue, it can cause inflammation in several different parts of the body. Symptoms can include swelling and pain.

Anyone can develop lupus, however it commonly occurs in women ages 15-44; African American, Asian American, Hispanic/Latino, Native American, or Pacific Islander; and people who have a family member with lupus or another autoimmune disease. Black and Latina women are 2-3 time more likely to develop lupus than their White counterparts.

## COVID-19 and Lupus:

The current covid-19 pandemic has a significant impact for people with lupus. The 2019–20 coronavirus pandemic is a pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)

This disease is transmitted person to person in the air by respiratory droplets. Some people are unaware that they are infected since the symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. These symptoms may include a cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell.

As shown earlier, people with lupus have suppressed immune system which can limit the body's ability to fight off bacteria and infections such as covid-19.When people with lupus do get sick their illness may also trigger a lupus flare. People with lupus may also have other conditions that put them at higher risk for serious illness from coronavirus such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, kidney disease, and a weakened immune system. As such they are highly at risk for catching covid-19 from someone who is infected.

## Staying healthy:

It is recommended that people with lupus practice protective measures such as:

- Avoid people who are sick — including family members — even if it seems like their illness is not serious.
- Avoid crowds, especially in closed spaces with little air circulation. The risk of exposure to respiratory illnesses increases when you share crowded, enclosed spaces with other people who may be sick.
- Practice social distancing—at least 6 feet apart
- Avoid air travel and cruise ship travel. This kind of travel involves enclosed spaces where it would be hard to avoid germs.

- When out in public, avoid handshakes, hugs, and other physical contact and wash your hands often, for at least 20 second.
- Stay home from work as much as possible to avoid potential exposure.

References:

Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (CDC), Coronavirus Covid-19 Fact sheet, September 2020.

Lupus Foundation of America, National Resource Center on Lupus Fact Sheets, March 2020;

CDC, Lupus Awareness, June 2020, retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/lupus/features/lupus-awareness/index.htm.

**Midlands of South Carolina BLACK NURSES ASSOCIATION**

Dec. 2020