

Lupus Postdiagnosis Checklist

Managing systemic lupus erythematosus (lupus) is a complex process because of the numerous genetic, immunologic, hormonal, and environmental factors that can affect the disease course.¹ To ensure optimal care after making a lupus diagnosis, healthcare providers may want to consider the following:

1. Who may be the most appropriate person to manage this patient long-term?¹

- Patients with mild, stable symptoms of lupus can be successfully managed by primary care practitioners and general internists.
- The American College of Rheumatology recommends that patients with moderate or severe disease be managed by a physician, usually a rheumatologist, with significant experience treating lupus.

2. What are some symptoms experienced by this patient that may require referral to other specialists?^{1,2}

- Pericarditis, left ventricular dysfunction* (cardiologist)
- Alopecia, purpura, skin rash, urticaria, vasculitis* (dermatologist)
- Abdominal pain* (gastroenterologist)
- Anemia, leukopenia, thrombocytopenia* (hematologist)
- Anxiety, depression* (mental health professional)
- Cellular casts, hematuria, nephrotic syndrome, proteinuria* (nephrologist)
- Cranial neuropathies, organic brain syndrome, peripheral neuropathies, psychosis, seizures, transverse myelitis* (neurologist)
- Pleuritis, pulmonary hypertension* (pulmonologist)

3. Has this patient been counseled on lifestyle changes that may help alleviate or reduce the chance of developing some symptoms of lupus?^{1,2}

- Importance of restful sleep and frequent breaks during the day (eg, *About how many hours do you sleep at night?*)
- Minimizing sun exposure and using sunscreen (eg, *How often do you wear sunscreen when outdoors?*)
- Benefits of regular exercise as tolerated by the patient (eg, *What kinds of exercise do you enjoy?*)
- Diet management for the prevention of obesity, osteoporosis, and hyperlipidemia (eg, *Do you prepare and eat healthy meals?*)

4. Is this patient pregnant or planning to become pregnant soon?²

- Women who are pregnant or considering pregnancy should be referred to an obstetrician with experience managing high-risk pregnancies in patients with lupus.

It is important for healthcare providers managing patients with lupus to provide appropriate referrals, emotional support, and counseling on lifestyle changes.

References: **1.** American College of Rheumatology Ad Hoc Committee on Systemic Lupus Erythematosus Guidelines. Guidelines for referral and management of systemic lupus erythematosus in adults. *Arthritis Rheum.* 1999;42:1785-1796. **2.** U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Lupus: A Patient Care Guide for Nurses and Other Health Professionals.* 3rd ed. September 2006. NIH publication 06-4262.

