



# HEALTH AWARENESS

## A Link Between Autoimmune Diseases— Sjögren's Syndrome And Lupus

(NAPSA)—Sjögren's (pronounced SHOW-grins) syndrome, a disease that affects one to four million Americans, most of whom are women, has been linked to other autoimmune diseases. An autoimmune disease is a condition in which the body's immune system mistakenly attacks its own cells and tissues. Sjögren's syndrome is a chronic autoimmune disease that attacks the moisture-producing glands of the body, causing symptoms of dryness.

### Symptoms Of Sjögren's

The onset of disease usually occurs between 40 and 50 years of age. While the classic symptoms are dryness of the mouth and eyes, patients may also experience skin, nose and feminine dryness. In addition to symptoms of dryness, joint pain and fatigue may be present.

As many as 50 percent of the people suffering from Sjögren's syndrome also have other autoimmune diseases, such as systemic lupus erythematosus, commonly known as lupus. Similar to Sjögren's syndrome, lupus is a chronic autoimmune disease that is also more prevalent in women than men. Conservative estimates show that more than 100,000 Americans are living with lupus.

Lupus can affect almost every organ system in the body, especially the skin, joints, heart, lungs, blood and kidneys. The symptoms of the disease can range from—fatigue, joint discomfort, hair loss, photosensitivity and fever—to more serious problems, such as kidney inflammation, cardiac failure and seizures. Lupus patients typically have skin



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rashes. A butterfly rash that appears over the bridge of the nose and on the cheeks is common. While several types of lupus exist, systemic lupus erythematosus is the one most commonly diagnosed in patients who already have Sjögren's syndrome.

### Relief Of Symptoms

By themselves or together, chronic autoimmune diseases such as Sjögren's syndrome and lupus can seriously affect your overall health. So if you experience such symptoms as achy joints, prolonged fatigue, fever, weight loss or skin rashes in addition to dry mouth or dry eyes, be sure to see your doctor for a comprehensive medical evaluation.

While there is currently no cure for Sjögren's syndrome, you can find relief of your dryness symptoms. If you think you may be among the many individuals suffering from this disease, be sure to talk to your doctor.



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