



# WOMEN'S HEALTH

## Raising Awareness Of Lupus

(NAPSA)—A dose of information could be one of the keys to helping women diagnose and treat lupus sooner.

Lupus is a serious national health problem, affecting an estimated 322,000 Americans, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Ninety percent of those diagnosed are women, and it is three times more common among minority women.

According to an Ad Council survey, about 80 percent of women in the U.S. say they have little or no knowledge of lupus. That lack of knowledge could mean women may not catch the disease at its earliest and most treatable stage.

As a chronic autoimmune disease, lupus causes the immune system to mistakenly attack the body's own healthy cells and tissue as though they were foreign invaders. Without intervention, the condition can lead to tissue damage, organ failure, disability and in many cases, death.

In an effort to raise awareness among women (ages 18-44) who are at greatest risk, the Ad Council and U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) Office on Women's Health launched a national PSA campaign in English and Spanish to address lupus and communicate the importance of early diagnosis and treatment. The campaign includes ads that feature actual women who have been diagnosed with lupus portraying women who are experiencing symptoms of the disease but have not yet asked their doctors or local community health centers, "Could I have lupus?"

"Despite its prevalence in the U.S., lupus is rarely discussed and



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**Talking to their doctor about lupus could help keep women safe.**

often misunderstood among women in our country," explains Dr. Wanda K. Jones, deputy assistant secretary for women's health at HHS.

The disease can have a wide range of symptoms including fatigue, hair loss, painful or swollen joints, fever, skin rashes and kidney problems. However, in the majority of people who are living with lupus, early and effective treatment can minimize symptoms, reduce inflammation and pain, help maintain normal functions and prevent the development of serious complications.

The PSAs conclude with the tagline, "For answers. For support. For hope." Women are directed to a new interactive Web site, [www.couldihavelupus.gov](http://www.couldihavelupus.gov), or to a toll-free number (1-800-994-9662), to learn about symptoms and treatment options and to access local resources. The site encourages visitors to upload their personal stories and post comments in an effort to initiate a dialogue about the disease.

"The campaign can significantly increase awareness and help women achieve early diagnosis, which will give them the greatest chance for improved health and long-term survival," says Dr. Jones.