



Is MS an Autoimmune Disease?

by NEWLIFEOUTLOOK TEAM

What Is an Autoimmune Disease?

Approximately 50 million people have been diagnosed with autoimmune disease in the United States alone — 75 percent of them women. Though so many people are affected, there is still a lack of understanding for sufferers.

The truth is that many people don't even know what an autoimmune disease is.

There are between 80 and 100 autoimmune diseases known at this time, as reported by the American Autoimmune Diseases Association (AARDA). These are all chronic illnesses that affect many parts of the body, and can even be life-threatening.

But what does an autoimmune disease actually do to the body?

If functioning properly, your immune system will fight off any foreign agents that may enter your body — this is what keeps you from getting sick. However, sometimes a trigger causes your immune system to malfunction and attack healthy cells instead — this is what happens with autoimmune disease.

If you have multiple sclerosis (MS), your immune system attacks and damages your myelin sheath, the protective tissue surrounding your nerves. This leads to transmission issues between your brain and body, and can even cause permanent damage to the nerves.

Diagnosis of any autoimmune disease is often a long and frustrating process. Many of these illness share symptoms, and it common for people to have more than one autoimmune disease at once — this makes diagnosis incredibly difficult.

Shared symptoms between autoimmune diseases are fever, fatigue and malaise. When symptoms worsen for a period of time it is known as a flare-up. Some people go months or even years without a flare-up — it is always different from person to person.

Flare-ups are exhausting and painful, and make it difficult to get symptoms under control. Remission occurs when symptoms finally subside.

Both the cause and cure for autoimmune disease are unknown. It is possible to manage symptoms and lead a relatively "normal" life, however until a cure is found the disease will be with you for life.

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a newLifeoutlook infographic

There are currently more than
80 KNOWN AUTOIMMUNE DISEASES
all of which are chronic, some life-threatening.ⁱ

UP TO 50 MILLION AMERICANS
suffer from autoimmune diseaseⁱⁱ

75% OF THOSE ARE WOMENⁱⁱⁱ

BUT WHAT EXACTLY IS AN AUTOIMMUNE DISEASE?

A "normal" immune system attacks foreign agents to protect your body against disease. But with autoimmune disease, your immune system mistakes healthy tissues for foreign ones and attacks them instead.^{iv}

The cause of this is unknown,
but it is believed autoimmunity can be triggered by:^v



BACTERIA



VIRUSES



DRUGS



TOXINS

What are the Most Common Autoimmune Diseases?^{vi}

- ★ Lupus
- ★ Multiple Sclerosis
- ★ Rheumatoid Arthritis
- ★ Celiac Disease
- ★ Psoriasis
- ★ Hashimoto's Disease
- ★ Sjögren's Syndrome
- ★ Type 1 Diabetes

COMMON SYMPTOMS

Many autoimmune conditions occur simultaneously and share similar symptoms, making diagnosis very difficult.

Common symptoms of many autoimmune diseases include:^{vii}

- ★ Fatigue
- ★ Fever
- ★ Malaise

Many parts of the body are affected, so symptoms are widely varied. Flare-ups are when these symptoms worsen, sometimes for days, weeks or months at a time.

You can ease symptoms with medical interventions and by following a healthy lifestyle, but autoimmune diseases have no cure.

Resources

i <http://www.aarda.org/autoimmune-information/autoimmune-statistics/>

ii <http://www.aarda.org/autoimmune-information/autoimmune-disease-in-women/>

iii <http://www.healthline.com/health/autoimmune-disorders#Overview1>

iv <http://www.aarda.org/autoimmune-information/questions-and-answers/>

v <http://www.healthline.com/health/autoimmune-disorders#Types2>

vi <http://www.healthline.com/health/autoimmune-disorders#Causes3>

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