



Prognosis and a Hopeful Future

The idea that lupus is generally a fatal disease is a big misconception. In fact, the prognosis of lupus is much better today than ever before.

It is true that medical science has not yet developed a method for curing lupus. And some people do die from the disease. However, people with non-organ threatening aspects of lupus can look forward to a normal lifespan if they:

- follow the instructions of their physician,
- take their medication(s) as prescribed, and
- know when to seek help for unexpected side effects of a medication or a new manifestation of their lupus.

Although some people with lupus have severe recurrent attacks and are frequently hospitalized, most people with lupus rarely require hospitalization. There are many lupus patients who never have to be hospitalized, especially if they are careful and follow their physician's instructions.

New research brings unexpected findings each year. The progress made in treatment and diagnosis during the last decade has been greater than that made over the past 100 years. It is therefore a sensible idea to maintain control of a disease that tomorrow may be curable.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is there a cure for lupus?

At the present time there is not a cure for lupus, but there certainly is effective treatment.

Is lupus a fatal disease?

Lupus is not a universally fatal disease. In fact, today with close follow-up and treatment, 80-90% of the people with lupus can expect to live a normal life span. Lupus does vary in intensity and degree, however, and there are people who have a mild case, there are those who have a moderate case and there are some who have a severe case of lupus, which tends to be more difficult to treat and bring under control. For people who have a severe flare-up, there is a greater chance that their lupus may be life-threatening. We know that some people do die of this disease and because of that we have a tremendous amount of respect for the potential of this disease. However, the majority of people living with lupus today can expect to live a normal lifespan. People frequently read in the literature that, 80-90% of people with lupus live for more than 10 years. Unfortunately, this is often misinterpreted as people with lupus live for only 10 years.

Let us clarify this.

It is important to understand that the "10 years" does not represent the number of years the person will live, but rather the number of years involved in the study. The studies followed patients with lupus from the time of diagnosis for a period of ten years. At the end of this research period they were able to conclude that 80-90% of the people enrolled were still alive. What this study did not look at is what happened in year 11, 12, 15, 20 and so on. We know there are many people who have been living with lupus for 15, 19, 25, 30 and 40 years. This is not a disease that is universally fatal to all. The majority of people with lupus today can expect to live a normal lifespan.

When people die of lupus, what do they usually die of?

Overwhelming infection and kidney failure are the two most common causes of death in people with lupus. Recently there is new information which indicates heart disease may be another leading cause of death among people with lupus.

Lupus Foundation of America, Inc.

<http://www.lupus.org/>