



Understanding autoimmunity

The immune system is a finely tuned network of organs and cells that protect you. When the body senses a threat, such as an injury, bacteria, or virus, the immune system swings into action. An autoimmune disease occurs when the immune system mistakenly targets your own tissues, causing damage.



COMMON AUTOIMMUNE CONDITIONS

- Type 1 diabetes
- Lupus
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Graves' disease
- Hashimoto's disease
- Multiple sclerosis
- Psoriasis
- Celiac disease
- Alopecia areata

SYMPTOMS

The specific symptoms vary by type of autoimmune condition. However, many autoimmune diseases share some common symptoms:

- Fatigue
- Dizziness
- Redness and swelling
- Muscle aches
- Low-grade fevers
- Symptoms that come and go, called flares and remission



CAUSES

No one knows exactly why some people develop an autoimmune disease. However, they are more common in some groups of people:

- Women are more likely than men to develop an autoimmune condition.
- Genetics may predispose a person to certain autoimmune diseases.
- Exposure to certain viruses, bacteria, or chemicals may trigger an autoimmune reaction.
- Some autoimmune disorders are more common among certain racial or ethnic groups.

TREATMENT

Your doctor is your best resource to properly diagnose and treat autoimmune diseases. The exact treatment depends on the type of autoimmune condition, the areas of the body affected, and your own health and medical history.

Treatment goals include:

- Suppress or slow down the immune system to prevent it from damaging tissues.
- Control symptoms, including pain, inflammation, rash, etc.
- Replace any substances your body can no longer make, for example, insulin if you have type 1 diabetes.