Finding the Best Natural Treatments for Lupus

by ERIC PATTERSON

What You Need to Know About Natural Lupus Treatment

The road to your lupus diagnosis was long and complicated, as numerous doctors seemed to send you on a wild goose chase of tests, diagnostic procedures, and periods of acting dismissive before finally coming to the lupus conclusion. Naturally, you hoped the clarity of diagnosis would signal straightforward and streamlined treatment, but this has not been the case.

Since your diagnosis, your treating physicians likely recommended a host of different treatments that could help your condition. Unfortunately, you have also had a lot of uncertainty concerning which treatment or combination of treatments would be your best choice, and you're wondering if any natural lupus treatment options could also help your symptoms.

Sound familiar?

Lupus Basics

Lupus is a chronic disease that negatively impacts a person's immune system and causes damaging effects to the body. Only about 10% of people with lupus are men, so women make up the significant majority of people with the condition.

As a disease, lupus can range anywhere from very mild to severe, with all parts of the body being at risk. Some of the most common symptoms of lupus include:

- Muscle and joint pain
- Fevers
- Rashes
- Chest pain, especially when breathing deeply
- Hair loss, bald spots and patchy hair
- Visual sensitivity to bright lights and sunshine
- Kidney issues like weight gain, swollen ankles and high blood pressure
- Sores in the mouth
- Periods of feelings very tired and fatigued
- Anemia
- Poor memory
- Dry eyes or eye inflammation

Some treatments for lupus cannot reverse the effects of the condition, they can only slow the progress.

Understanding the Most Common Lupus Treatments

Though it can be frustrating and discouraging to hear, there is no cure for lupus. The best treatments can only limit the advance of symptoms.

Many prescribers will treat lupus symptoms with a medication or a combination of medications to provide the wanted outcomes. Some of the most commonly used medications for lupus are:

- **Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs):** over-the-counter medications like ibuprofen to reduce pain and swelling.
- **Corticosteroids:** these steroids can help symptoms by relieving pain, reducing swelling and settling the nervous system.
- **Antimalarial drugs:** though the conditions seem unrelated, malaria medications can address the joint pain, skin rashes, fatigue and lung problems of lupus.
- **BLyS-specific inhibitors:** these represent a group of medications that aim to reduce certain cells linked to the body's immune response.
- **Immunosuppressants and chemotherapy:** used only in the most severe cases of lupus.

Lupus Treatments: Knowing Your Naturals

Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) treatments focus on the use of natural supplements and mind-body remedies to address and reduce unwanted symptoms. In the case of lupus, there are many natural treatment options.

Vitamins and Supplements

The options that involve vitamins and supplements include:

- **Vitamin D:** many people lack the needed levels of vitamin D, and people with lupus seem to have even lower amounts in their system. There is a connection between lupus and vitamin D deficiency. Those with lupus seem to tolerate high doses of vitamin D and report fewer symptoms with supplement treatment.
- **Vitamin C and E:** studies have investigated the effects of supplementing vitamins C and E for people with lupus, but the findings are not conclusive on the treatment's usefulness.
- **Fish oil:** several studies show that the proper amounts of fish oil can have a positive effect on some symptoms of lupus. Studies found success with just 3g of fish oil.
- **N-acetyl cysteine (NAC):** NAC, a precursor to a natural antioxidant, has been found to increase cognitive abilities, reduce impulsivity and significantly reduce symptoms of lupus.
- **Turmeric:** some people use herbal medicine for natural lupus treatment. The spice turmeric is helpful for people with lupus as it can shrink the influence of several symptoms, such as high blood pressure and high levels of blood and protein in the urine.
- **Other supplements and vitamins:** since people are invested in finding helpful natural lupus treatment options, many are being explored. For example, DHEA supplements are of interested, but they have not shown reliable benefits so far.

Mind-body Approach

Beyond vitamins and supplements, experts are exploring a number of mind-body options for lupus treatment like:

- **Acupuncture:** the practice of placing thin needles in specific areas of the skin is an effective way to address many physical and mental health issues, and it seems to help with lupus as well.
- **Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT):** this mental health therapy style can assist with depression and anxiety, but the treatment is effective for a list of physical ailments as well. CBT can help people reduce the stress, anxiety and fatigue associated with lupus, while building a variety of healthy coping skills to improve well-being.
- **Meditation:** meditation and mindfulness, when used with people who have chronic ailments, work well to reduce the sensation of pain and psychological distress.

Traditional lupus treatments may be ideal for some, but others demand a more natural and holistic approach to their disease. Those with lupus should be encouraged to explore complementary and alternative medicine approaches, as long as they do not conflict with their other treatments or physician’s recommendations. The only thing you have to lose is the pain of lupus.