



## Overview of Autoimmune Diseases

Your immune system is the network of cells and tissues throughout your body that work together to defend you from viruses, bacteria, and infection. It tries to identify, kill, and eliminate the invaders that might hurt you.

### What happens in autoimmune diseases?

Autoimmune diseases refer to problems with the acquired immune system's reactions. Immune cells target the body's own healthy tissues by mistake, signaling the body to attack them.

Autoimmune diseases can affect almost any part of the body, including the:

- Heart.
- Brain.
- Nerves.
- Muscles.
- Skin.
- Eyes.
- Joints.
- Lungs.
- Kidneys.
- Glands.
- Digestive system.
- Blood vessels.

### Types of Autoimmune Diseases

Some examples of autoimmune disease include:

- [Alopecia areata](#).
- Autoimmune hemolytic anemia.
- Autoimmune hepatitis.
- Dermatomyositis.
- Diabetes (type 1).

- Glomerulonephritis.
- Granulomatosis with polyangiitis.
- Graves' disease.
- Guillain-Barré syndrome.
- Idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura.
- Some forms of [juvenile idiopathic arthritis](#).
- Myasthenia gravis.
- Some forms of myocarditis.
- Multiple sclerosis.
- [Pemphigus/pemphigoid](#).
- Pernicious anemia.
- Polyarteritis nodosa.
- Polymyositis.
- Primary biliary cirrhosis.
- [Psoriasis](#).
- [Rheumatoid arthritis](#).
- [Scleroderma/systemic sclerosis](#).
- [Sjögren's syndrome](#).
- [Systemic lupus erythematosus](#).
- Some forms of thyroiditis.
- Some forms of uveitis.
- [Vitiligo](#).

## Symptoms of Autoimmune Diseases

Most autoimmune diseases cause inflammation, which produces redness, heat, pain, and swelling.

Many autoimmune diseases affect more than one part of the body. The symptoms you have will depend on the body part(s) affected, such as:

- Joints, which can cause joint pain, stiffness, and loss of function.
- Thyroid, which might cause you to be tired, gain weight, or have muscle aches.
- Skin, which can cause rashes, blisters, and color changes.

## Causes of Autoimmune Diseases

No one is sure what causes autoimmune diseases. In most cases, a combination of factors is probably at work, such as:

- **Genes**, which may make you more likely to develop the disease.
- **Environment**, such as a virus that triggers the disease if you have the gene(s).

## Treatment of Autoimmune Diseases

The treatment depends on the type of autoimmune disease. In most cases, your doctor will prescribe medications such as corticosteroids or immunosuppressive drugs to reduce inflammation.

## Research Progress Related to Autoimmune Diseases

Researchers continue to explore the genetics and causes of autoimmune disorders. Understanding the causes of these diseases will improve both diagnosis and treatment.

## For More Info

### **U.S. Food and Drug Administration**

Toll free: 888-INFO-FDA (888-463-6332)

Website: <https://www.fda.gov>

Drugs@FDA at <https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cder/daf>. Drugs@FDA is a searchable catalog of FDA-approved drug products.

### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics**

Website: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs>

### **National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases**

Website: <https://www.niaid.nih.gov/diseases-conditions/autoimmune-diseases>

### **American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association**

Website: <https://www.aarda.org>

If you need more information about available resources in your language or other languages, please visit our webpages below or contact the NIAMS Information Clearinghouse at [NIAMSInfo@mail.nih.gov](mailto:NIAMSInfo@mail.nih.gov).

- [Asian Language Health Information](#)
- [Spanish Language Health Information](#)