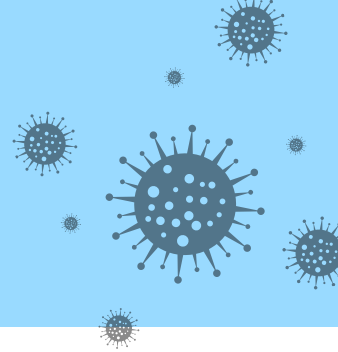


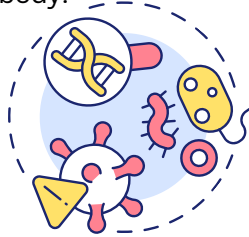
Autoimmune diseases

What everyone should know



What are autoimmune diseases?

Autoimmune diseases happen when the immune system accidentally targets healthy cells in the body.



Key Facts

- More than 80 autoimmune diseases are recognised.
- Women are impacted up to four times more often than men.
- Symptoms can be unclear or resemble other conditions.
- Common onset: ages 30–50, especially during hormonal shifts (e.g., menopause)

Common Symptoms

- Chronic fatigue
- Joint pain or stiffness
- Skin rashes or discolouration
- Digestive issues (bloating, diarrhea, pain)
- Brain fog or poor concentration

Common Autoimmune Conditions

- Rheumatoid Arthritis
- Lupus (SLE)
- Hashimoto's Thyroiditis
- Type 1 Diabetes
- Psoriasis
- Multiple Sclerosis

How Are They Diagnosed?

- Blood tests (antibodies, inflammation markers)
- Imaging (X-rays, MRI)
- Review of symptoms and medical history
- Referral to a specialist (e.g. rheumatologist, endocrinologist)

Treatment & Management

- Immunosuppressive or anti-inflammatory medications
- Lifestyle support:
- Rest and recovery
- Balanced, anti-inflammatory diet
- Stress management (yoga, mindfulness)
- Gentle physical activity (walking, stretching, swimming)
- Emotional support: therapy or support groups

Coping Tips

- Keep a symptom diary
- Listen to your body – rest when necessary
- Avoid smoking and limit alcohol consumption
- Build a supportive care team
- Don't delay medical follow-up

When to See a Doctor

- New or worsening fatigue, joint pain, or skin changes
- Symptoms lasting longer than a few weeks
- Family history of autoimmune disease
- Hormonal shifts (e.g., perimenopause) that trigger symptoms.

Final Note

Autoimmune diseases are manageable. Early diagnosis and self-care are essential. If you suspect something's wrong, stand up for yourself – and keep pushing for answers.

