ARE YOU AT RISK?

Do you have an autoimmune disease, such as rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, systemic sclerosis or ankylosing spondylitis? If so, you should know you are at increased risk for developing cardiovascular disease.

Individuals with autoimmune diseases are significantly more likely to have atherosclerosis, the buildup of fatty substances on the walls of arteries. Atherosclerosis can lead to heart attack and stroke. Inflammation is a common culprit in both atherosclerosis and autoimmune diseases.
WHY IT MATTERS

Heart disease is a serious, life-threatening illness. In fact, heart disease is the leading cause of death among men and women.

Fortunately, many of the factors that increase your risk for heart disease are things YOU can control — even if you have an autoimmune disease. Talk to your autoimmune healthcare provider about your personal risk factors for heart disease and how you can manage your autoimmune disease to lower your heart disease risk.

How many of these cardiovascular risk factors do YOU have?

- I have an autoimmune disease.
- I am overweight or obese.
- I do not get enough physical activity.
- I have high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure or diabetes.
- I smoke cigarettes or use tobacco products.
- I have a family history of heart disease.
- I am over age 45 (men) or 55 (women).
- I have been diagnosed with heart disease.

Talk to your doctor TODAY.

Your doctor can help you prevent heart disease. Ask your doctor:

1. What are MY risk factors for cardiovascular disease, and why?
2. What screenings or tests are right for ME?
3. What actions can I take to decrease my risk for cardiovascular disease?
4. What are MY cardiovascular health goals?

FAST STATS

Although both men and women can develop an autoimmune disease, nearly 85 percent of autoimmune diseases occur in women.

Rheumatoid arthritis and lupus cause inflammation in the body. Inflammation is associated with plaque buildup in the arteries (atherosclerosis), which is a significant risk factor for cardiovascular disease.

Rheumatoid arthritis increases your risk for heart attack, coronary heart failure and stiffening of the arteries.

Autoimmune rheumatic diseases (those that affect joints and connective tissue) can cause sudden cardiac death due to disruptions in the heart’s rhythm.

Heart disease is a major complication of lupus and a leading cause of death among lupus patients.