

AARDA

The American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association (AARDA) is a 501 (c) (3) national nonprofit organization dedicated to the eradication of autoimmune diseases and the alleviation of suffering and the socioeconomic impact of autoimmunity through initiating, fostering and facilitating collaboration in the areas of education, public awareness, research and patient services in an effective, ethical and efficient manner. AARDA is the only national nonprofit organization bringing a national focus to autoimmunity as a category of disease and a major women's health issue.

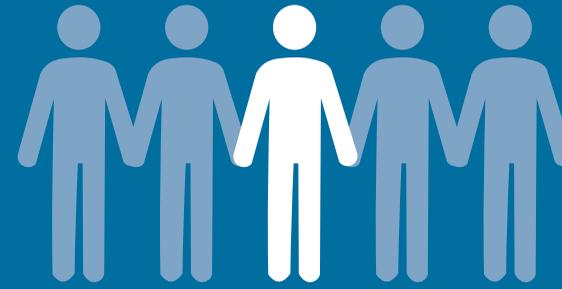
Established in 1991, AARDA has become a leading authority on autoimmune disease and a leading advocate for autoimmune patients.

AARDA's achievements include:

- Creation of a permanent Autoimmune Diseases Coordinating Committee at the National Institutes of Health (NIH);
- Formation of the National Coalition of Autoimmune Patient Groups (NCAPG), a coalition of single-disease organizations and AARDA, which works to consolidate the voice of autoimmune disease patients and to promote increased education, awareness and research into all aspects of autoimmune disease through a collaborative approach;
- Establishment of the first Center for Autoimmune Disease Research at Johns Hopkins University;
- Establishment of March is National Autoimmune Diseases Awareness Month;
- Launch of a national "Linking Together for a Cure" campaign to raise autoimmune awareness and funding for autoimmune research;
- Establishment of the Autoimmune Research Network (ARNet), which facilitates patient participation in autoimmune research.
- Partnership with the Allegheny Health Network Autoimmunity Institute, which provides coordinated diagnosis and treatment of autoimmune diseases.

Autoimmune FACTS

- There are more than 100 autoimmune diseases.
- 50 million Americans have one or more autoimmune diseases.
- Approximately 75 percent of those affected are women.
- Autoimmune diseases are among the top 10 leading causes of death among American women.
- Autoimmune diseases tend to cluster in families, impacting multiple family members and generations.
- Autoimmunity is NOT related to AIDS and is NOT a form of cancer.
- Autoimmune diseases are NOT contagious nor infectious. They are usually chronic and can cause major organ damage and, in some cases, be life-threatening.



1 in every 5 Americans
has an autoimmune disease...

- Lupus
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Type 1 diabetes
- Multiple sclerosis
- Crohn's disease
- Scleroderma
- Hashimoto's
- Graves' disease
- Psoriasis
- Celiac
- Sarcoidosis
- Ulcerative colitis
- Vasculitis
- Vitiligo
- Autoimmune hepatitis
- Myositis
- Cardiomyopathy
- and more than 100 others

...likely someone you know.

More than **100**
autoimmune diseases

impact 50 million Americans every day.
Of those affected,

75%
are women.

What is autoimmune disease?

Autoimmune disease is a broad category of related diseases in which a person's immune system mistakenly attacks the tissues and organs it was designed to protect. Normally, the body's immune system protects it by responding to invading microorganisms, such as bacteria and viruses. The immune system produces antibodies, which are special proteins that recognize and destroy the invaders. Autoimmune diseases occur when these autoantibodies attack the body's own cells, tissues and organs.

What causes autoimmunity?

Scientists do not yet fully understand the immune system and what causes the body to produce an immune response to itself. However, we do know that there are several triggers which play a role in developing an autoimmune disease.

Bacteria, viruses, toxins, hormones, significant stress, and some drugs may trigger an autoimmune response in a person who already has a genetic (inherited) predisposition to develop an autoimmune disease.



**American
Autoimmune**
Related Diseases Association, Inc.

22100 Gratiot Avenue | Eastpointe, MI 48021
(586) 776-3900 | Fax: (586) 776-3903
aarda@aarda.org | aarda.org



**American
Autoimmune**
Related Diseases Association, Inc.

Types of Autoimmunity

Autoimmunity can affect the body in various ways. It can result in the slow destruction of specific types of cells, tissues, organs or joints or the stimulation of an organ into excessive growth or interference with its function. Organs and tissues frequently affected include: the endocrine glands (such as the thyroid, pancreas and adrenal glands); components of the blood (such as red blood cells); and the connective tissues, skin, muscles and joints.

Autoimmune diseases frequently are classified into organ-specific diseases and non-organ-specific types. In organ-specific diseases, autoimmune activity is directed against a single organ. Examples include: Hashimoto's thyroiditis (thyroid gland), pernicious anemia (stomach), Addison's disease (adrenal glands), and type 1 diabetes (pancreas). In non-organ-specific diseases, autoimmune activity is spread widely throughout the body. Examples include: rheumatoid arthritis, systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), and dermatomyositis.

Treatment

The first objective in treating autoimmune disease is to correct the major deficiencies in the body, for example, replacing hormones depleted by thyroid disease or insulin depleted by type 1 diabetes. With autoimmune blood disorders, it may be necessary to replace components of the blood by transfusion.

The next objective is to reduce inflammation and the immune response. It can be challenging to control the disorder while maintaining the body's ability to fight disease. The drugs most commonly used to do this are corticosteroids. Severe disorders can be treated with other more

powerful immunosuppressant drugs. These drugs are used with caution because they can have serious side effects, including increased susceptibility to infection, high blood pressure, cataracts, sleep disturbances and osteoporosis.

Intravenous immunoglobulin (IVIg) therapy is used in the treatment of various autoimmune diseases to reduce circulating immune complexes.

Some mild forms of rheumatic autoimmune diseases are treated by relieving the symptoms with NSAIDs (nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs). A class of NSAIDs called COX-2 inhibitors work in more severe diseases by blocking an enzyme in the body which causes pain and swelling.

A group of drugs called DMARDs (disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs) are becoming the first-line drugs used to treat rheumatic autoimmune diseases. They can slow disease progression rather than just treat the symptoms.

A newer class of DMARDs, called Biologics, are medicines based on compounds made from living cells that target the protein that causes inflammation and damage to tissue.

All treatment protocols should be discussed with your health care professional.

Family Connection

Autoimmune diseases tend to cluster in families. About 20 percent of the population seem to have a genetic or inherited factor that increases their chances of developing an autoimmune disease. Several genes together determine a person's ability to inherit an autoimmune disease. Genetic predisposition, however, is not the only cause. Other factors, it seems, need to be present to trigger the start of the disease.

It is important for families with members who have autoimmune diseases to share their family history, especially when another member of the family is experiencing medical problems that appear to be difficult to diagnose. On average, it takes three years and four physicians to reach an accurate diagnosis of an autoimmune disease.

AUTOIMMUNE DISEASE LIST

Addison's Disease
Alopecia Areata
Ankylosing Spondylitis
Antiphospholipid Syndrome (APS)
Autoimmune Hepatitis
Autoimmune Myocarditis
Autoimmune Thrombocytopenic Purpura (ATP)
Behçet's Disease
Cardiomyopathy
Celiac Disease
Chronic Inflammatory Demyelinating Polyneuropathy (CIDP)
Crohn's Disease
Demyelinating Neuropathies
Dermatomyositis
Goodpasture's Syndrome
Granulomatosis with Polyangiitis (formerly Wegener's)
Graves' Disease
Guillain-Barré Syndrome
Hashimoto's Thyroiditis
Hemolytic Anemia
Interstitial Cystitis
Juvenile Arthritis
Lichen Planus
Lupus
Lyme Disease
Mixed Connective Tissue Disease
Multiple Sclerosis
Myasthenia Gravis
Myositis
Narcolepsy
Neuromyelitis Optica

Neutropenia
Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders Associated with Streptococcus (PANDAS)
Pemphigus
Pernicious Anemia
Polymyositis
Primary Biliary Cholangitis
Psoriasis
Psoriatic arthritis
Raynaud's
Rheumatic Heart Disease
Rheumatoid Arthritis
Sarcoidosis
Scleroderma
Sjögren's Syndrome
Stiff-person Syndrome
Type 1 Diabetes
Ulcerative Colitis
Uveitis
Vasculitis
Vitiligo
And more than 50 other chronic disorders!

For a complete list, visit aarda.org.

