

DISCOID LUPUS ERYTHEMATOSUS (DLE)

Lupus is an autoimmune disease that involves your immune system fighting against parts of your own body. It is not a form of cancer. There are two main types of lupus. The first affects only your skin, which usually is a form of discoid lupus erythematosus, and the second that affects your body (systemic lupus erythematosus). The type of lupus most publicized on television and the internet is that of systemic lupus erythematosus. This can be a serious illness. It is important to realize that this is not the type of lupus that you have. Discoid lupus erythematosus only affects the skin; it does not cause any problems with your internal health.

DLE is a condition characterized by red, scaling patches that occur on the face, ears, scalp, lips, and at times, other areas of the head, neck, and body. The red patches may heal as lighter or darker scars. The disease can come and go for long periods of time. When the DLE lesions occur in hairy areas such as on the scalp, it is possible for there to be temporary or permanent hair loss.

The cause of DLE is unknown. As I noted above, it is an autoimmune process, but the exact cause is not certain. DLE is more common in women than in men and tends to affect young adults. It can occur in patients of any age, however. In many cases, discoid lupus can be caused or worsened by sun exposure. It is important to use the appropriate sun protection.

In many cases, a small biopsy test of the skin needs to be done to confirm the diagnosis because other conditions can appear similar to discoid lupus. If the biopsy test does show evidence of DLE, then blood tests are usually done to have a baseline to compare with.

Treatment of discoid lupus includes various topical medications that can be rubbed into the individual areas. In many cases, injections of a type of cortisone medicine right into the area are the most beneficial. In some cases, oral medicine is required because this is the most effective way of managing the condition.

As I noted above, DLE can be worsened by sun exposure. It is appropriate to use the right sun protection, which usually is a type of a physical block sunscreen.

Although DLE is a form of lupus, it usually involves only the skin. There are very effective treatments for this condition. I will monitor your progress based on the type of treatment you have.

If you have any other questions regarding this condition, please do not hesitate to ask before you leave the office.