Autoimmune Diseases

For a complete listing of all autoimmune diseases, please visit our website at www.aiada.org

Autoimmune Diseases Association is...

...a national nonprofit, 501(c)(3) voluntary health organization dedicated to bringing a national focus to autoimmune as a category of disease and promoting collaborative research efforts in order to find better treatments and a cure for all autoimmune diseases. It is the only national organization dedicated to addressing the problem of autoimmunity, the major cause of chronic illness.

Autoimmune Diseases Association’s administrative costs represent under 8 percent of its total public support. The organization is a member of the National Health Council and complies with its Standards of Excellence. It also meets all 20 of the Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance’s Standards for Charity Accountability.

Among its many achievements, Autoimmune Diseases Association has been the leader in the following:

- Creation of a permanent Autoimmune Diseases Coordinating Committee at the National Institutes of Health
- Formation of the National Coalition of Autoimmune Patient Groups (NCAPG), a coalition of single-disease organizations and AARDA. NCAPG works to coordinate the voice of autoimmune disease patients and to promote increased education, awareness, and research into all aspects of autoimmune disease through a collaborative approach.
- Creation, review and endorsement of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Autoimmune Diseases Research Plan, the first national, coordinated, collaborative effort to study the cause, incidence, diagnosis and treatment of autoimmune disease, as well as to educate the medical community and the public.
- Establishment of the First-of-its-kind Center for Autoimmune Disease Research at Johns Hopkins University.
- AARDA conducts national awareness campaigns including an annual congressional briefing presented along with the NCAPG to make policymakers aware of the complex issues surrounding autoimmune disease.
- Acceptance of autoimmunity and autoimmune disease in the national lexis.

Autoimmune Facts

- There are more than 100 known autoimmune diseases.
- 50 million Americans have one or more autoimmune diseases.
- Approximately 75 percent of those affected are women. Autoimmune disease is one of the top 10 leading causes of death among female children and women in all age groups up to 64 years of age.
- Autoimmunity is not related to AIDS (in which an acquired virus attacks the immune system) and is not a form of cancer.
- Researchers have found “family clusters” of autoimmune; persons with autoimmune diseases often find that other members of their family also have autoimmune diseases.
- Autoimmune diseases are neither contagious nor infectious. They are usually chronic and can cause major organ damage and, in some instances, be life-threatening.

Q. What do these diseases have in common?

- Lupus
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Type 1 diabetes
- Hashimoto’s thyroiditis
- Multiple sclerosis
- Celiac’s disease
- Scleroderma
- Graves’ disease
- Cardiomyopathy
- Myasthenia gravis
- Autoimmune hepatitis
- Sjogren’s syndrome
- Pernicious anemia
- Pernicious nephritis
- Pernicious neuropathy
- Pernicious nephritis

A. Autoimmunity

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What is autoimmune disease?

Autoimmune disease is a broad category of related diseases in which the person’s immune system attacks the body’s own tissue. It occurs when the body’s immune system goes awry and mistakenly attacks the tissues and organs it was designed to protect. Normally the immune system protects the body by responding to invading microorganisms, such as bacteria and viruses. It does this by producing 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.

Women are affected three times more often than men. Once a patient develops an autoimmune disease, the odds of developing another are greatly increased.

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 a number of triggers which play a role in developing an autoimmune disease. Bacteria, viruses, toxins, hormones, significant stress and some drugs can reduce the immune response in someone who already has a genetic (inherited) predisposition to develop such an autoimmune disease.

Types of Autoimmunity

Autoimmune processes can affect the body in various ways. Autoimmunity can result in the slow destruction of specific types of cells, tissues, organs or joints, in the stimulation of an organ into excessive growth, or in 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 are frequently classified into organ-specific diseases and non-organ-specific types. In organ-specific diseases, the autoimmune process is directed against a single organ. Examples of autoimmune diseases in this category include Hashimoto’s thyroiditis, rheumatoid arthritis, Sjogren’s syndrome, lupus, and dermatomyositis.

In non-organ-specific diseases, autoimmune activity is widely spread throughout the body. They may include rheumatoid arthritis, Sjogren’s, lupus, and dermatomyositis.

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What is AARD?

Autoimmune Diseases Association provides help in continuing its vital work. Join us and invite us to your quarterly newsletter efforts to keep informed of our patient and physician education programs, research advancements, and excellent autoimmune disease-specific information. You can join online at www.aard.org using your credit card (on our secure website), by calling (580) 776-3900 or by completing this form. Please print clearly.

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☐ YES, I would like to join AARD in its vital work and receive its quarterly newsletters. Enclosed is the $44 annual membership/subscription donation.

☐ YES, I would like to help further the fight against autoimmune diseases. Enclosed is a tax-deductible donation of $25 $50 $100 $150 $200 $250 $300 $350 $400 $450 $500 $550 $600 $650 $700 $750 $800 $850 $900 $950 $1,000 Other

☒ I would like to join AARD’s Honorary Leadership Circle to receive AARD plus periodic research updates and an annual report. Enclosed is $500.

Please be assured that AARD does not sell, rent or exchange its mailing list.

*If you would like to join but cannot afford the full membership donation, please enclose a note and a donation of any amount.

AARD is a fully accredited IRS 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization.

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Let’s Stay In Touch

Autoimmune Diseases Association needs your help in continuing its vital work. Join us and receive our quarterly newsletter efforts to keep informed of our patient and physician education programs, research advancements, and excellent autoimmune disease-specific information. You can join online at www.aard.org using your credit card (on our secure website), by calling (580) 776-3900 or by completing this form. Please print clearly.