

# Lupus News

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*Lupus Foundation of Southern Arizona, Inc.*

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## BOOSTING YOUR

# happiness

## SET-POINT

Do you ever fantasize about how much happier you'd be if you were rich?

Research suggests that six months after winning the lottery, you wouldn't be much happier than you are today. After studying 1,500 pairs of twins,

Dr. David Lykken, a behavioral geneticist, concluded that each of us has a preset happiness level that predisposes us to a certain level of contentment.



It's genetic, he says, much like the weight "set-point" researchers believe our bodies strive to maintain, regardless of how much or how little we eat.

This doesn't mean our moods are written in stone. Events — happy and sad — do affect us, but their role is limited. "Adult happiness is equally determined by genetic factors and by the effect of life experience," says Lykken.

Dr. Lykken's advice is

to "focus on small things that you know make you feel good — a tasty meal, working in the garden, spending time with friends — then sprinkle your life with these treats." A steady diet of these simple pleasures, he says, will keep you above your "happiness set-point" and, ultimately, more content. ♦

*Dr. David Lykken, Professor of Psychology, University of Minnesota—  
Dr. Lykken, Thomas Bouchard, and Auke Telegen are authors of the*

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**Happy New Year  
from the Lupus  
Foundation !**

## When You're Stressed, Catch Your Breath

This Mayo Clinic quick exercise helps you learn to relax your breathing. When you're faced with a stressful situation, it can have an immediate calming effect:

1. To a count of four, inhale slowly. Imagine the inhaled, warm air flowing to all parts of your body.
2. Pause.
3. Slowly exhale, again counting to four. Imagine the tension flowing out.
4. Pause, then begin again. Repeat several times. ♦



## Special points of interest:

- Trying to achieve perfection during the holiday season may not be realistic.
- Conventional wisdom may be changing on long term immunosuppressant use.
- Chocolate's reputation is on the rise.
- Relieve stress, catch your breath.

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## .....From Your President

### Mission Statement

To provide information, education and referrals for those affected by lupus; to promote the development and enhancement of health and social welfare services at the local level to assist lupus patients; to promote public education and increase knowledge and understanding of the disease and its ramifications; to support relevant lupus research, and collaborate with the professional community in improving the standards of diagnosis, care and treatment of lupus patients.

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As your new Board President, I am honored and humbled to serve the Lupus Community of Southern Arizona. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Joni Broussard for her tenable service to the Foundation as President for the last five years. Joni will now act as the Foundation's VP. Two of our new Board members were also elected as Officers. Sherri Fritz and Lani Baker are the Foundation's new Treasurer and Secretary, respectively. We also welcomed three additional Board members in 2014, Shaunna Kowaleski, Valerie Light, and Dr. Mark Bradley.

In sharing a little about myself, I am happily married to my husband, Dennis, and have three grown step-children, one step-grandchild, and two rescue albino Dobermans. I am the Director of Corporate Philanthropy for Finley Distributing, and I love to paint and play golf.

While I may be your new President, being a Lupus patient for 29 years, I share the same challenges and uncertainties in life, as many of you. Many of you know, managing SLE, whether you are a patient, family member, or care-giver, can be challenging at times. We have evolved into a lightning-speed 21<sup>st</sup> century, and naturally we are all under more stress at times than Lupus will allow.

As we wind down 2014, I would like to thank everyone that either sponsored or participated in this year's Walk-the-Loop for Lupus in April and the Hit-the-Links for Lupus golf tournament in November. Both events were a huge success!

The Foundation is planning an exciting 2015. We are working on creating stronger partnerships in our community to add programs benefitting our Lupus women, children and men. We invite you to log on to our newly designed website [www.lupus-az.org](http://www.lupus-az.org) for details on our upcoming programs, classes and events. And, please stay in touch with us through Facebook on our web, as we welcome your input, your journey, your thoughts and your needs.

I wish you all have a happy and *'healthy'* Holiday season!

*Rebecca Shields*

2015 Annual Lupus Walkathon April 25, 2015





# Lupus & Holiday Season Stress

Summary of presentation given to the SLE Workshop at Hospital for Special Surgery, NY, by Caroline Norris, MSW Intern

Stress is a normal part of life. Too much of it, however, can be taxing to the body. The holiday season is a time of additional stress for many people, and it can be even more challenging for people with [lupus](#).

In this presentation to the SLE Workshop, Caroline Norris, M.S.W. Intern and SLE Workshop Coordinator, shared different ways to prevent stress during the holidays to alleviate and minimize the impact of stress.

Family relationships, finances, and the physical demands of the holiday season are all common triggers of stress. Holiday festivities mean spending additional time with family, which can heighten relationship issues for some people.

Another common holiday stress trigger is the additional expenses the season brings. There are more pressures to spend money during the holiday season. It can be very difficult to manage the costs of presents, food, and decorations, especially for people on a fixed income.

Ms. Norris also reminded the group of the significant physical demands the holiday season brings. Shopping, decorating, cooking, gift-wrapping, and going to parties can be exhausting.

## Planning Ahead

A good way of preventing holiday stress is by planning ahead and prioritizing. This can include creating a schedule of all the different activities and tasks. Careful planning can eliminate the rush of last minute forgotten things to do, which can sap your energy.

For people who struggle with fatigue it might be useful to include rest and relaxation in the holiday schedule. Conserving energy and making time for recovery will likely make participation in holiday activities much more enjoyable. This recovery time is also important in terms of pacing yourself and preventing yourself from “crashing.”

Another good planning technique is creating a budget. There is so much pressure on people to spend, spend, spend. Planning ahead and creating a budget will eliminate overspending. It is also quite easy to forget that the holiday season is about “presence,” not presents.

Some money-saving tips suggested included setting a spending limit when exchanging gifts with loved ones. Another way to save money is to “gift” your talents. For example, if you happen to be low on funds, but you are a good cook, offer to prepare a meal for a busy family member or loved one. This is a great way to save money and simultaneously spend time with those you care about. Don’t forget how much thoughtful cards and homemade gifts are always appreciated.

Another important part of planning ahead for the holiday season is to set realistic expectations. Trying to achieve perfection usually leaves little room for enjoyment. Unfortunately, many people have an expectation of the perfect holiday, which is usually something out a movie or television show. In real life, last minute things come up, people arrive late, decorations aren’t perfect, and dinner sometimes gets burned.

The best way for dealing with these unplanned events is to try and find the humor in them. The holiday party where the dog ate the dinner will

## Lupus & Holiday Stress cont'd from page

more likely be remembered and laughed about later than the party where everything was perfect.

### Communicating

Ms. Norris shared with the group just how important communication is to surviving the holiday season when living with lupus. An important communication during the holiday season is “saying no.” It can be very difficult to turn down people’s invitations or requests, but sometimes saying yes isn’t the best thing to do.

When you have limited time and energy, participating in certain events or doing certain tasks can prevent you from doing what you really care about. The best way to say no is to do it respectfully and, if comfortable, to practice full disclosure.

Many people with lupus struggle with the unpredictable nature of the illness, they may be concerned about making plans or commitments and then having to back out. Ask the host of a party ahead of time if it will be problem if you have to back out at the last minute or if it would be all right if you left early.

### Practicing the 4 A’s

In dealing with stress, Ms. Norris suggests practicing what is commonly known as the 4 A’s: Avoid, Alter, Accept and Adapt.

**Avoid:** Avoid the people and things that upset you or cause too much stress. One way of practicing avoidance is by saying no.

**Alter:** If you find that the normal holiday season routine is too fatiguing, alter your expectations. If loved ones aren’t respecting your needs, respectfully ask them to alter their behavior.

**Accept:** Acceptance is an important part of managing stress. During the holiday season, you may have to accept that you won’t be able to participate in all the activities you would like.

**Adapt:** One way of avoiding stress is to adapt. Living with lupus often means having to adapt one’s lifestyle or plans; this is true during the holiday season as well.

While the 4 A’s are excellent for managing the holiday season, they are also useful in managing the everyday struggles of a chronic condition like lupus.

### Relaxation Techniques

Even with all the planning ahead, a certain amount of stress is unavoidable. Relaxation techniques are a good way of managing periods of increased stress. Regular use of such techniques may even lead to better health.

Breathing exercises are a good way of managing stress and, in general, they are a very useful method of symptom control or release. Ms. Norris led the SLE Workshop members in the “Letting Go of Tension Exercise” from the *Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook* by Martha Davis, Elizabeth Robbins Eshelman, and Matthew McKay.

Participants were asked to sit comfortably in their chair with their feet on the floor, and to close their eyes if they felt comfortable doing so. Then members were directed to breathe deeply into their abdomen, hold the breath in for a second and then to let it out. With each breath in, say to yourself, “I am breathing in relaxation,” and as you exhale, “I am breathing out tension.” ♦

*Our thanks to Carol Norris, MSW Intern  
Hospital for Special Surgery, NY*

## Can Chocolate Be Good For My Health? From "Healthy Lifestyle" Magazine by Katherine Zeratsky, RD, L.D.



**H**ealthy chocolate sounds like a dream come true, but chocolate hasn't gained the status of health food quite yet. Still, chocolate's reputation is on the rise, as a growing number of studies suggest that it can be a heart-healthy choice.

Chocolate and its main ingredient, cocoa, appear to reduce risk factors for heart disease. Flavanols in cocoa beans have antioxidant effects that reduce cell damage implicated in heart disease. Flavanols — which are more prevalent in dark chocolate than in milk chocolate — also help lower blood pressure and improve vascular function.

In addition, some research has linked chocolate consumption to reduced risks of diabetes, stroke and heart attack. One caveat: More research is

needed to confirm these results.

In the meantime, if you want to add chocolate to your diet, do so in moderation. Why? Most commercial chocolate has ingredients that add fat, sugar and calories. And too much can contribute to weight gain, a risk factor for high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes. On the other hand, cocoa itself, unlike chocolate, is low in sugar and fat while offering potential health benefits. If you enjoy chocolate flavor, add plain cocoa to your low-fat milk or morning oats. ♦

## For patients in remission, stopping immunosuppressants may be possible

**I**t has long been conventional wisdom that lupus patients have to be on constant or increasing dosages of immunosuppressants for the rest of their lives. That conventional wisdom may be about to change.

A new study presented at the **European League Against Rheumatism Annual Congress (EULAR 2014)** showed that, for the majority of lupus patients who are in remission, it is possible to successfully stop immunosuppressant therapy without triggering

a flare of their disease. Within two years, it was possible to stop the immunosuppressant in about 70% of clinically stable patients. Half were successful within three years, and this proportion remained stable for up to five years.

**Dr. Zahi Touma**, Assistant Professor of Medicine, University of Toronto, Canada lead author of the study, expressed optimism that this study may provide the best guideline yet on how, when, and whether to stop

immunosuppressants for lupus patients who are in stable condition. The study also noted that patients who taper off the use of immunosuppressants over a longer period of time are at a lower risk of flare-ups than those who taper off faster.

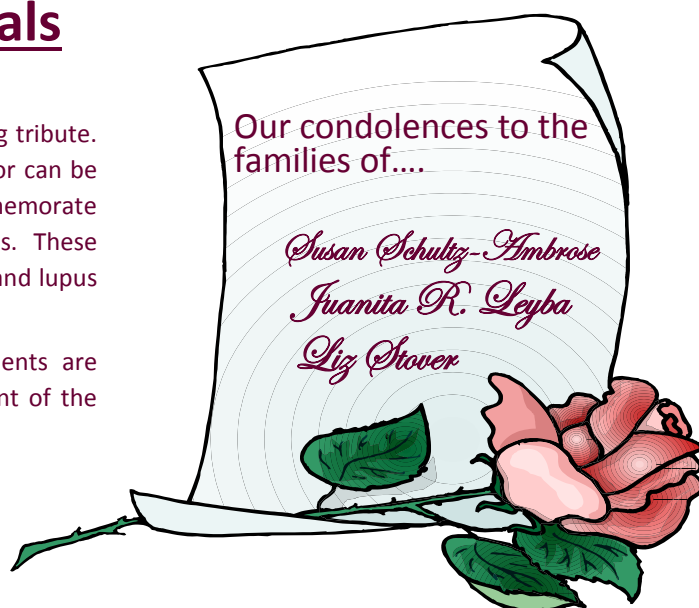
As always, please consult your team of caregivers, including your rheumatologist, about your specific treatment, and always follow your doctor's advice. ♦

*Our thanks to Lupus Foundation of Northern California LFNC.org*

## Memorials

A memorial gift to the Lupus Foundation is a loving and lasting tribute. This can be a gift in memory of a deceased relative or friend. or can be given as a tribute in the name of a friend or relative to commemorate occasions such as birthdays, anniversaries or special events. These thoughtful gifts serve the living by supporting lupus education and lupus research.

Acknowledgements of memorials and tribute acknowledgements are mailed to the family with no reference made as to the amount of the gift. The donor receives a tax receipt from the Foundation.





## New Guidance On How and When To Stop Immunosuppressants In Lupus Patients

A new study presented today at the European League Against Rheumatism Annual Congress (EULAR 2014) showed that, for the majority of lupus patients who are in remission, it is possible to successfully stop immunosuppressant therapy without triggering a flare of their disease.<sup>1</sup> Within two years, it was possible to stop the immunosuppressant in about 70% of clinically stable patients. Half were successful within three years, and this proportion remained stable for up to five years.<sup>1</sup>

Lupus is a chronic inflammatory disease that can affect any organ system, but mainly involves the joints, kidneys and skin.<sup>2</sup> It typically follows a relapsing and remitting course; during a relapse, patients feel fatigue, and may develop rashes, arthritis (painful and swollen joints) and fever.<sup>2</sup> Being able to stop long-term immunosuppressant therapy in a lupus patient without inducing a relapse is an important treatment goal because of the potential side effects of these drugs, including the increased risk of infection and cancer.

In the USA, the average incidence of SLE has been estimated to range between 1.8 and 7.6 cases per 100,000 person-years.<sup>3</sup> Incidence rates in Europe are similar, ranging from 3.3 to 4.8 per 100,000 person-years. The incidence of SLE is greater in Afro-Americans compared with Caucasians.<sup>4</sup> SLE affects 10 times as many women as men.<sup>2</sup>

Lupus patients who develop serious or life-threatening problems such as kidney inflammation, lung or heart involvement, and central nervous system symptoms need more aggressive treatment, including high-dose corticosteroids such as prednisone, and immunosuppressants such as azathioprine (AZA), methotrexate (MTX) and mycophenolate mofetil (MMF).

"Until now, information on whether and how immunosuppressant therapy might be stopped in lupus patients after achieving low disease activity or remission has been limited," said lead author Dr Zahi Touma, Assistant Professor of Medicine, Clinician-Scientist, Division Of Rheumatology, University of Toronto, Canada.

"The results from our study provide useful guidance on how best to stop the immunosuppressant without triggering a flare. For example, patients who discontinued their immunosuppressant more slowly were less likely to flare within two years," Dr Touma explained. "Those lupus patients who were serologically active at the time the immunosuppressant was stopped were much more likely to flare on follow-up visits," he added. ♦



**Membership Form**

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(must have if paying by credit card\*)

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Single Membership \$20.00 \_\_\_\_\_ Family Membership \$25.00 \_\_\_\_\_

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**\*\*Note for Credit Card Users:** To process, we will need the name and address as listed on the  
credit card -- If different than address listed for membership please indicate

E-mail addresses are only used **in our office** to send you [receipts](#), [program updates](#) & [newsletters](#) – No Donation Solicitations

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FOUNDATION

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