

antimalarial, is a useful medication for inflammatory control, rash, and arthritis; NSAIDs, which relieve muscle and joint inflammation; and immunosuppressive agents, such as cyclophosphamide, for renal and CNS disease. Mycophenolate, azathioprine, and methotrexate are effective immunosuppressive drugs that may be used to control SLE and allow steroids to be reduced. Rituximab is a monoclonal antibody that results in decreased antibody formation and has been used off-label in pediatric lupus patients who have not responded to standard therapy (Nwobi, Abitbol, Chandar, et al, 2008). Antihypertensives, low-dose aspirin (as a blood thinner), and calcium and vitamin D supplements are just a few of the additional remedies that may be necessary to treat or avoid complications.

General supportive care includes sufficient nutrition, sleep and rest, and exercise. Exposure to the sun and ultraviolet B (UVB) light is limited because of its association with SLE exacerbation.

## **Nursing Care Management**

The principal nursing goal is to help the child and family positively adjust to the disease and therapy. The child and family must learn to recognize subtle signs of disease exacerbation and potential complications of medication therapy and to communicate these concerns to their care provider. Consequently, patient and family education is an ongoing process initiated at diagnosis and tailored to the patient's individual needs. Referral to a social worker, psychologist, or support group may help the child and family make a successful adjustment. Support groups are associated with the Lupus Foundation of America and the Arthritis Foundation.

Key issues include therapy compliance; body-image problems associated with rash, hair loss, and steroid therapy; school attendance; vocational activities; social relationships; sexual activity; and pregnancy. (See [Chapter 17](#) for a discussion on adjusting to a chronic illness.) Specific instructions for avoiding exposure to the sun and UVB light, such as using sunscreens, wearing sun-resistant clothing, and altering outdoor activities, must be provided with great sensitivity to ensure compliance while minimizing the associated feeling of being different from peers. Patients need to be instructed to maintain regular medical supervision and seek attention quickly during illness or before