



Understanding Your Positive ANA Result

A guide for patients when lab results raise questions, but not answers.



What is an ANA?

ANA stands for antinuclear antibody. It's a test that looks for antibodies that sometimes show up in autoimmune diseases like lupus or Sjögren's. But ANA is a screening test, not a diagnosis.

Why did my doctor test ANA?

Your symptoms, like fatigue, joint pain, or brain fog, may have raised the question of autoimmune disease. ANA helps screen for that possibility.

What does a positive ANA mean?

A positive ANA means your immune system is making certain antibodies. But this result:

- Can appear in healthy people (especially women)
- Can be found in other conditions (thyroid issues, infections, even stress)
- Does not confirm autoimmune disease by itself

About 15–20% of healthy people may test ANA positive at low levels.

Why don't I have a diagnosis, then?

Autoimmune diseases have patterns: specific symptoms, signs on exam, lab markers, imaging. If your evaluation doesn't show these patterns, it's safer not to make a diagnosis prematurely. We treat people, not just lab numbers.





What Happens Next?

- We may watch your symptoms over time.
- We may explore other causes (hormonal, GI, mental health, etc.).
- We can still treat symptoms that affect your quality of life.
- You are always welcome back if symptoms change or worsen.

What should I know moving forward?

- You are not alone.
- Your symptoms are real.
- Some answers take time.



What Can I Do Now?

Even without a clear autoimmune diagnosis, there are meaningful steps you can take to support your health and wellbeing:

Focus on Symptom Management:

You don't need a diagnosis to treat discomfort. Talk with your PCP about things to ease fatigue, pain, brain fog, or sleep issues.

Rule Out Other Conditions:

Conditions like thyroid disease, iron deficiency, sleep apnea, IBS, POTS, depression, and perimenopause can mimic autoimmune symptoms.

Track Your Symptoms:

Use a journal or app to record your symptoms, energy levels, sleep, diet, and flares. This helps us identify patterns.

Support Your Immune System:

Focus on sleep, gentle movement, anti-inflammatory eating, and stress management.

- Sleep: Aim for 7 to 9 hours
- Movement: Gentle exercise like walking or yoga can help
- Nutrition: Anti-inflammatory patterns (think: colorful veggies, lean proteins, omega-3s)
- Stress Management: Meditation, journaling, breathing practices, or therapy

Give Yourself Grace:

Not having a diagnosis doesn't make your symptoms less real.

Recheck if Things Change:

Autoimmune diseases can evolve slowly. Follow up if symptoms worsen or change, such as: persistent rash, unexplained fever, weight loss, joint swelling or stiffness.

