

LONG ISLAND / NASSAU

Westbury mother to run 5k on Thanksgiving while battling lupus



Following her battle with lupus, Sasheen Reid of Westbury, is getting back in the race. She is running in a Thanksgiving 5K race, at Flushing Meadows-Corona Park in Queens. Credit: Howard Schnapp

By Keldy Ortiz

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When a Westbury mother of three crosses the finish line of a 5K race on Thanksgiving, she will have reached a milestone not only in her running but also in her battle with lupus, a disease two to three times more likely to hit Black and Latina women than whites.

A Jamaican American and an avid runner, Sasheen Reid, 35, hopes to inspire and bring awareness to those who may have the disease when she participates in the Sri Chinmoy Thanksgiving Day race at Flushing Meadows-Corona Park in Queens Thursday.

The race is named after the Indian spiritual leader, who encouraged physical fitness in a meditation practice that Reid has incorporated into her routine. She was cleared to run in September by her doctor, just over three years since she was diagnosed with lupus in October 2018.

"After my lupus flare, it was hard to run, which is really one of my hobbies and my passion, my stress relief," Reid said. "Being able to [run] again, it kind of signifies to me that it is possible after a rough path to come back to some sense of normalcy."

Reid, a physician assistant, is halfway through a two-year clinical trial for adults who are primarily women of color with active systemic lupus erythematosus, or SLE. Participants won't know if they are receiving a placebo or BENLYSTA, an FDA-approved treatment for lupus, she said.

For Reid, speaking up about the disease, which includes hair loss and at times prevented her from walking, is her way to reach out to others like her.

"Whether you're diagnosed or not, speak to your doctor because there's a lot of innovation, including the clinical trial, that may help you," she said.

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Black and Latina women of childbearing ages 15 to 44 are two to three times likelier to develop lupus than white women, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

The chronic autoimmune disease, which is more common in women than men, is potentially fatal but can be managed through treatment. Minority patients are more likely to have a serious bout with the incurable illness, experts say.

Symptoms of lupus can include muscle and joint pain or swelling, fatigue, hair loss, and blood cell and immunological abnormalities, according to the CDC and the Mayo Clinic.

A study published by the [CDC in February reports](#) that while SLE disproportionately affects minority populations, mortality rates are even higher for Asian and Hispanic/Latino people, making early diagnosis and

treatment critical.

Hoping to change the trend, Cynthia Aranow, a physician and the co-director of the Lupus Center of Excellence at the Feinstein Institutes for Medical Research in Manhasset, approached Reid, who is her patient, and told her about the clinical trial at the center.

"If a study is done and women of color are excluded, we don't know whether or not those results can be generalized to everyone," Aranow said. "This is the problem with health disparities.

"I think having increased awareness is crucial to be able to identify people early and then to potentially intervene early," Aranow said.

Sasheen Reid's husband, Jory Reid, said he knew very little about lupus and is glad she is sharing her story.

"The benefit is someone somewhere who has this disease and is considering just giving up hope, I'm hoping that they'll see this and realize that you know what life goes on," Jory Reid, 37, said.

A mother of three children, ages 4, 6 and 18 months, Reid has run in two marathons and plans to run a third in 2023.

Reid, who did not have debilitating issues at the time, said she continued to train for a marathon in Hawaii the same month she was diagnosed and ran the New York City Marathon in November 2019.

"I want to be seen as a picture of good health and things you can do to continue to maintain your health despite you being diagnosed with a chronic illness," she said.

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