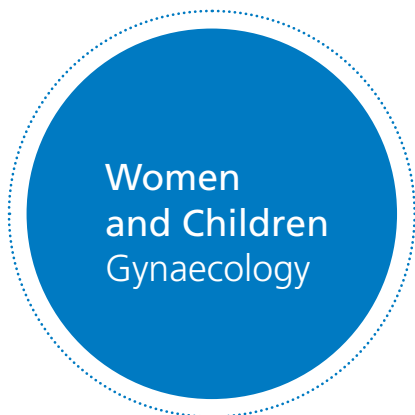


Lichen Sclerosus

Patient Information



Women
and Children
Gynaecology

What is Lichen Sclerosus?

This is an inflammatory condition of the skin which produces a change in the texture of the skin. Areas of slightly thickened ivory-coloured skin can be seen in the affected areas.

Lichen Sclerosus can occur anywhere on the body, but most commonly affects the skin surrounding the vulva and the anus (back passage).

The cause of the condition is unknown, but it is not infectious.

Sometimes there is a family history of this condition and also a family history of other auto-immune disorders such as thyroid gland problems.

It often develops at the time of the menopause or before the onset of puberty, but can appear at any age.

The main symptom is itchiness rather than soreness.

In long-standing disease the condition may result in alteration in the anatomy of the vulva and introitus (entrance to the vagina) which may make sexual intercourse uncomfortable.

What does the treatment involve?

First, it is important to stop using all soaps and bubble bath preparations and to use a soap substitute such as **Aqueous Cream**. This helps to retain moisture in the skin to help keep it soft and supple.

The most successful treatment then involves the use of steroid ointments.

The two most common ointments prescribed are: Dermovate or Propaderm which you should use as follows.

First month:

- Apply once daily (usually at night)
- A thin layer of ointment should be applied to the affected areas, not forgetting the skin around the anus if this is also involved.

Second month:

- Apply alternate nights.

Third month:

- Apply twice weekly.

How long do I continue with the treatment?

After three months you should only need to use your steroid ointment once or twice a week.

If your symptoms return, increase to the number of applications that did control them.

For example, if your problems return when you are using the ointment on alternate nights, you need to go back to applying the ointment every night.

How much ointment should I use?

It is important to keep within the recommended amounts of ointment prescribed and not to overuse it.

You need to apply only a thin layer of the ointment to the affected areas.

The 30 gram tube that is usually prescribed should last between two and three months.

If you do need to get further supplies from your own GP please keep a record of the amount you use. We will ask how much ointment is needed to control your symptoms when you next come to the clinic..

What about side effects?

There may be a burning sensation when you first apply the ointment but this usually disappears within 10 minutes.

If the burning persists and is severe, stop using the ointment ... you may be sensitive to one of its components. If this happens, you will need to change to the other ointment listed on page three and will need to get it prescribed by your own GP.

Is there anything I can do to help myself?

Various self-help remedies have been found to be effective in relieving some of the symptoms relating to some vulval disorders.

Your condition may be helped by following the advice given below:

- Avoid wearing tight restricting clothes. This includes tight jeans and underwear.
- Try to avoid wearing tights, especially in warm weather (wear stockings or go without).
- Cotton underwear is cooler and more comfortable than synthetic fibres.
- Avoid using biological detergents when washing underclothes. Also, wash underwear on the hottest wash possible and do not add scented fabric conditioners. Rinse well.
- Avoid using soap and bubble-bath products as they tend to have a drying effect on the skin and can increase irritation and soreness of affected areas. We suggest using Aqueous Cream as a soap substitute for washing.

What about follow-up?

Normally, you will be reviewed after the first 12 weeks of your treatment to see if things are improving.

Once your skin condition is stable you will usually be left to keep an eye on things yourself.

Very rarely, a skin cancer can develop from long-standing chronic inflammation. If you do develop an ulcer or a small growth that does not respond to treatment after a month, you must consult your doctor without delay.

Comments, compliments, concerns or complaints

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However we do appreciate that there may be an occasion where you, or your family, feel dissatisfied with the standard of service you receive. Please do not hesitate to tell us about your concerns as this helps us to learn from your experience and to improve services for future patients.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

This service aims to advise and support patients, families and carers and help sort out problems quickly on your behalf.

This service is available at The James Cook University Hospital and the Friarage Hospital Northallerton, please ask a member of staff for further information.

All information contained in this booklet, as advised by: The Gynaecology Medical and Nursing Team at The James Cook University Hospital.

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