

Lichen Sclerosus in Children

Information for Parents and Carers

What is Lichen Sclerosus?

Lichen Sclerosus is an uncommon inflammatory skin condition, which mainly affects the genital skin. The cause is not known but it may be a form of autoimmune disease (when the immune system attacks healthy cells in the body) and can run in families.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- Itching
- Sore skin
- Constipation (due to painful cracks or tightening of the skin around the anus)
- Pain on passing urine
- The skin can initially be red and inflamed and then turn white, with cracks or splits in the skin, slight bleeding, bruising and scarring.

How is it treated?

- Teach your child to wipe from front to back gently when going to the toilet and to dry the area gently after passing urine to avoid urine being in prolonged contact with the skin.
- Avoid soaps and bubble baths for washing as these may cause irritation
- Use a moisturiser and soap substitute as recommended by your doctor to soften and protect the skin.
- The most successful treatment is strong steroid ointment used once daily initially and usually at night. You may need to apply the ointment for a full 12 weeks even if the symptoms improve. Lichen Sclerosus can flare up again however. You may need to use the ointment once or twice a week for at least 12 months to help prevent flare ups.
- Areas affected by Lichen Sclerosus can also be susceptible to infection with Candida yeasts (thrush) or bacteria requiring additional treatment.

Follow up

Lichen Sclerosus tends to improve when girls reach puberty (two out of three girls) but it may not completely disappear. They may have flare-ups which require treatment.

Girls are not likely to have any problems with their periods, sexual intercourse, pregnancy or delivery of babies if the symptoms have been treated. Most children can be discharged when their condition is stable and are only seen if there are any concerns or problems. However if Lichen Sclerosus continues into adulthood then there should be regular annual

checks with a doctor as long standing chronic inflammation can cause skin cancer in a very small number of cases.

Where can I get further information?

The Association for Lichen Sclerosus and Vulval Health: www.lichensclerosus.org

The British Association of Dermatologists patient information leaflet: www.bad.org.uk

Royal Hospital for Children and Young People
50 Little France Crescent
Edinburgh EH16 4TJ
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