

Lichen Sclerosus

You have been diagnosed with **Lichen Sclerosus**. You may have had a biopsy that confirms this and/or we may have diagnosed you by clinical examination. Lichen sclerosus is a dermatological (skin) disorder that can often cause the vulvar skin to appear white, thin or crinkly. Lichen sclerosus can occur at any age and often causes itching and irritation. The skin changes can involve the entire vulva, from the clitoris to the perianal area. Sometimes parts of the vulvar anatomy can look smaller or look like they have shrunk. This process called resorption is common with lichen sclerosus and often affects the labia minora (inner lips) and the clitoris.

Healthcare providers do not know the cause of lichen sclerosus. It may be autoimmune and is often seen in patients with other autoimmune disorders. Lichen sclerosus is not contagious and cannot be passed on to others.

In most cases, we will give you a prescription for a steroid ointment to treat your lichen sclerosus. You should use the ointment as prescribed, anywhere from daily to twice weekly depending on the severity and timing of your diagnosis. In general, you will use the ointment daily at the beginning of treatment and with any worsening of symptoms. You will then taper down to using it two to three times per week. In most cases, the steroid ointment is used for the rest of your life. Lichen sclerosus cannot be cured but you can often decrease or completely relieve all of your symptoms by using the ointment as prescribed. The ointment may not fully reverse the way your vulvar skin looks but it may improve the appearance to a degree and stop the changes from becoming worse. Steroid ointments are safe for use on the vulvar skin when used appropriately.

We will ask you to return to the Center for Vulvar Disease every six to twelve months to reevaluate your vulvar skin and your symptoms. Women with lichen sclerosus have about a 4% chance of getting vulvar cancer. It is important to let us know if you notice any new sores that don't heal properly or a major change in your symptoms. Studies tell us that you can decrease your risk of getting vulvar cancer by using your steroid ointment and keeping your symptoms low.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions about your diagnosis or your treatment(s) and be sure to keep your follow up appointments.

<http://www.lichensclerosus.org>

<http://www.dermnetz.org/index.html>

