

LICHEN SCLEROSUS ET ATROFICUS

DEFINITION

Lichen sclerosus et atroficus (hereafter Lichen) is a rare condition where the connective tissue of the mucous membrane perishes and is replaced by solid scar-like tissue instead.

APPEARANCE

Lichen turns the skin surrounding genitalia white and glistening and the mucosa get thinner and slightly wrinkled. The changes on women are mainly visible on the inner and outer lips of the vulva, the perineum, and around the anus.

In some cases, there are internal bleedings in the mucous membrane, turning the mucosa a sort of dark bloodred colour.

RISK FACTORS

The disease affects both children and adults of either sex. It is more common in women than men and especially postmenopausal women. Lichen sclerosus et atroficus appears suddenly and its cause is unknown.

SYMPTOMS

- ❖ Itching (most common)
- ❖ Stinging and burning pains
- ❖ Pains during intercourse
- ❖ Bleeding from lacerations in the mucous membrane
- ❖ Shrinking of the labia
- ❖ Narrower vaginal opening

DIAGNOSIS

In most cases lichen sclerosus can be diagnosed at first sight but it is always best to confirm it with a tissue biopsy.

TREATMENT

Most patients suffering of lichen sclerosus can be treated with steroid creams and ointments (f.ex. Dermovate®) containing highly efficient corticosteroids. This is how the treatment is done:

- ❖ First 4 weeks: apply every night.
- ❖ Next 4 weeks: apply every other night (1/2).
- ❖ Following 4 weeks: apply twice (2) a week.
- ❖ Thereafter once (1) a week as a lifelong maintenance treatment.

NOTE: do not apply more than 30-60g/year.

After three months applying the treatment once a week is sufficient. We recommend you continue the treatment permanently in order to maintain the results. We also recommend applying fatty cream or oil at least twice a day. One way to do it is by applying cream right after the ointment, or if it stings, apply some fatty cream before the steroid cream.

If you stick to it, the treatment will keep the disease away but your mucosa might remain pale and sensitive.

Lichen Sclerosus is a chronic disease, so it's possible it might suddenly flare up again even though it had calmed down. If so, simply apply the steroid cream once a day for 4-7 days.

HYGIENE RECOMMENDATIONS

Practice good hygiene by washing your outer genitals with soap (not very much), make sure you rinse it off completely and fully dry your skin afterwards.

Make sure you use a good fatty cream (at least 70%) or oil, e.g., Decubal, Warming Critical Care, Locobase Repair, almond oil, coconut oil, baby oil. You can buy these at the pharmacy.

When it comes to bathing, swimming, cycling, or other physical activity, you can use fatty cream or silicone-based lubricant such as Pjur with Soft glide, Pjur Premium glide, or similar.

Sex & Relationship

The disease can have a significant impact on your sex life. It can be difficult and very painful to have intercourse. It's really important you tell your partner how the disease affects you and your body. Together you can find solutions. You can find alternative positions and use lubricant such as the ones mentioned above, oil, or fatty cream.

CONTROL

You can get a check-up once a year, either at a gynaecologist or your own doctor. The key is to react to any visible skin change.

The objective with this information sheet and the following check-up is to prepare you to take good care of your skin disorder together with your GP (doctor). We recommend consulting your doctor once or twice a year if the condition stays calm, partly to adjust the treatment and partly to check for cell changes or abnormal cells; the latter is fairly uncommon. You must also contact your doctor if the symptoms do not improve with the treatment or if wounds occur that do not heal. Also contact the doctor if knots form in the area.

You preferably also need a blood test as the disease is often linked to other diseases such as metabolic diseases and diabetes. You must therefore have a blood test done so that you can be screened for metabolic diseases when you have been diagnosed with Lichen Sclerosus.



WHO CAN I CALL WITH QUESTIONS?

You are welcome to call Kvindeklivnikken during telephone hours on 36 46 71 40.

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