

Living with Lichen Sclerosus

What is Lichen Sclerosus?

Lichen Sclerosus is a disease that usually affects the vulva, but may affect other areas of the body. It is a benign condition, not cancer.

The cause of Lichen Sclerosus is not known. The symptoms of Lichen Sclerosus can be controlled, but the disease cannot be cured.

It is most common in older women, but it can affect women of all ages.

Lichen Sclerosus will not affect your sexual partner. It does not spread by sexual contact.

What are the symptoms of Lichen Sclerosus?

One of the first symptoms is itching around the affected area, as the fragile skin becomes irritated.

Other symptoms may include:

- painful intercourse
- splitting of the skin
- bleeding

If treatment is delayed for a long time, the appearance of the vulva may change. The skin becomes thin and white. The labia, or small lips of the vulva may shrink and disappear completely. In severe cases without treatment, the clitoris may also become buried and the vaginal opening may close completely.

Can Lichen Sclerosus be treated?

Yes, treatment should begin as soon as a diagnosis is made. Several ointments are available to treat Lichen Sclerosus.

At first, you apply the ointment frequently to the affected area. As the area improves, you may not need to use the ointment as often. Your doctor will tell you which ointment is best for you and how often to use it.

Before you leave the Clinic, be sure you know how to use the ointment correctly.

How long will I need to be treated?

There is no cure for Lichen Sclerosus, but with proper treatment you can control the symptoms and keep them from getting worse. In many cases the area greatly improves.

To keep Lichen Sclerosus under control, you may have to continue treatment for the rest of your life.

You may only need to apply the ointment once or twice a week, or just when needed. Check with your doctor to be sure.

If you need your prescription renewed,
have the Pharmacy call the Clinic.

Do not stop using the ointment.

What can I do to prevent flare-ups?

- Keep the area clean and dry.
- After you bathe, use your hair dryer set on low to dry the area. Using a towel may cause irritation and itching.
- Wear loose clothing.
- Wear cotton underwear.
- Do not wear underwear to bed.
- Do not scratch.
- Some women recommend avoiding acid or citrus foods.

What happens if my symptoms get worse?

**If your symptoms get worse,
call the Colposcopy Clinic at the Juravinski Hospital
905-574-8488.**

You may need:

- to apply the ointment more often
- a stronger ointment
- to take other medications as well

Does Lichen Sclerosus affect pregnancy?

Lichen Sclerosus does not usually interfere with becoming pregnant, or having a vaginal birth. Due to hormone changes, some women notice an improvement during pregnancy. Lichen Sclerosus will not harm the baby.