

Lichen Sclerosus

You have a condition called Lichen Sclerosus. This is a skin condition that affects the genitals in particular though it does affect non-genital skin too.

It is an itchy complaint and it produces red and white patches of skin. Both men and women can be affected, but it is more common in women. Lichen Sclerosus can occur at any age, even in children, and it may run in families. Although the cause of Lichen Sclerosus is still unknown, we do know it isn't contagious, so it cannot be caught off someone else.

The skin in Lichen Sclerosus becomes thinned and shiny. It is very delicate and may split or crack, and become very sore. It is important to avoid soap, bubble bath and other irritants. Simple moisturising cream such as Aqueous Cream or Diprobase can be used instead of soap and as soothing treatments. Lubricants such as Vaseline or K-Y Jelly should be used for intercourse to prevent skin damage.

Treatment

To treat Lichen Sclerosus we use a steroid ointment. This will very effectively switch off the inflammation which causes the itching. You will be given a 30 gram tube of Dermovate ointment. Apply the ointment to the area affected, usually the vulva and around the back passage, as follows:

Month 1 Apply steroid every night
Month 2 Apply steroid every other night
Month 3 Apply steroid twice a week

After this you shouldn't have to apply steroid regularly, but if your itching returns restart the steroid once a night until better (usually within a week). The 30 gram tube of ointment should last 3 months, if you get more from your GP please let us know so we can keep a track of how much steroid you are using.

Although still very rare, cancer of the vulva is more common in women with Lichen Sclerosus. It is therefore important that if any lumps, ulcers or other new changes to the vulval skin persist after using the Dermovate for 14 days, you should see your doctor straight away. You will have a check up visit after 3 months to see whether you need regular treatment or further check-ups.

For further help and information: www.lichensclerosus.org