

Lichen Sclerosus

Gynaecology

You have been told that you have Lichen Sclerosus on the vulva (the skin of the outer genitals). This is a chronic skin condition that causes white, shiny and tight patches on the skin. The condition can occur at any age, but it is most often seen in women in middle age. In this folder you can read more about Lichen Sclerosus.

Causes

The exact cause of Lichen Sclerosus is not known. It is likely that an autoimmune reaction plays a role. The condition can occur together with other autoimmune diseases, such as:

- Diabetes
- Thyroid disorders
- Lupus (SLE)
- Scleroderma
- Vitiligo
- Certain types of anaemia

Symptoms

The most common symptom is severe itching of the vulva. Other symptoms that may occur are:

- A burning or painful feeling
- Small blood blisters or sores, often caused by scratching
- Thicker, white skin
- Cracks or small tears

Over time, changes to the vulva may develop, such as:

- The labia sticking together or narrowing of the urethra, which can make urination more difficult
- The clitoris becoming covered and no longer visible
- The opening of the vagina becoming smaller, which can make sex painful
- More frequent infections, such as yeast infections

There is a small risk of skin cancer in the affected area (about 5%). This is why a yearly check-up is important. Lichen Sclerosus can also appear on other parts of the body, such as the arms, shoulders or back. Children can also develop this condition.

Diagnosis

The doctor can usually recognise the condition during a physical examination. Sometimes the diagnosis is confirmed by taking a small tissue sample. This is done under local anaesthetic. The tissue is then examined in a laboratory.

Treatment

Lichen Sclerosus cannot be cured, but the symptoms can often be treated well. The treatment aims to reduce itching, pain and inflammation. The main treatment is a corticosteroid cream, which you apply to the skin following the schedule given by your doctor.

Surgery is almost never needed, but in some cases, it can help to separate labia that have grown together or to open the urethra. Surgery may also help reduce symptoms caused by scar tissue.

Emergency after visiting DC Klinieken

In case of an emergency, call: 088 0100 998.

Insurance

DC Klinieken has contracts with all health insurers. This means that almost all care is reimbursed, just like in the hospital. You do need a referral from your (general) doctor. Please be aware of your own deductible. More information about reimbursements and possible exceptions can be found at: www.dcklinieken.nl/vergoedingen.

Questions

For more information and answers to frequently asked questions, go to: www.dcklinieken.nl/contact or contact our Service and Information Centre at 088 0100 900.