

Lichen Planus

Patient information leaflet

Lichen planus

Lichen planus is a chronic inflammatory condition that affects the mouth as well as the skin and sometimes the genital area. It is a common condition affecting over 2% of population, being more frequent in middle age and women are more commonly affected than men.

- It is **not** cancer.
- It is **not** contagious.
- It is **not** inherited.

Cause and presentation

- In most cases the cause is unknown though it is likely to do with the body's immune system. It can also be caused by certain medication and materials in dental fillings.
- It can appear on the inside of the cheeks, tongue, roof of mouth and gums. It often involves more than one side and it presents as a lace-like pattern of white patches. However, it can appear as red patches or as areas of ulceration on the lining of the mouth.
- Lichen planus can be symptom-free or may present as a burning or stinging discomfort especially to certain foods (spicy, hot, citrus fruits, alcohol etc) and when tooth-brushing.

Diagnosis

- Lichen planus is usually diagnosed by appearance and just by looking inside your mouth.
- A biopsy (taking a small piece of tissue so that it can be looked at closely under microscope) is sometimes required to confirm the diagnosis.

Treatment

- There is no known cure for lichen planus and treatment is only required if causing problems such as soreness. Treatment is usually in form of mouthwashes prescribed to you by your doctor.
- It is **not** related to food, although certain foods, drinks or events (stress, trauma) can provoke the symptoms and it is advisable to avoid those.
- It is important that you do not smoke, maintain good oral hygiene and ensure regular check up with your dentist or a specialist.

Prognosis

- Lichen planus is a benign condition and may go away spontaneously. It is difficult to predict whether it will take several months or years or if it will resolve altogether.