

Lichen Sclerosus

What is lichen sclerosus?

Lichen sclerosus is a skin condition that normally affects the genital area. It causes changes in the skin in the vulva, penis and anal area. It is most often seen in young girls.

What are the symptoms?

It may start with itching or pain when urinating and bathing. Children may not want to urinate. This may lead to wetting their pants or beds. Vaginal discharge and/or odor may come before the skin changes.

When the skin changes start:

- The area may be red and sore. Pink or ivory colored bumps will then appear. In time the bumps join together in a larger area.
- An hourglass shaped pale, pink rash around the vagina and anus may be seen. The skin will later become wrinkled and thin.
- In severe cases the skin may breakdown with ulcers and/or blood blisters. This may lead to scarring.
- Constipation is more common if the skin around the anus is involved.
- Boys who have the condition can have a hard time pulling back (retract) the foreskin on the penis.



What causes it?

It is not clear what causes lichen sclerosus. It is not caused by an infection and is not spread from one person to another. It often occurs in families. It might be an autoimmune problem. This means it is a reaction of the body against itself.

How is it diagnosed?

A health care provider familiar with this condition should make the diagnosis. The provider will ask about symptoms and do an exam of the skin. Rarely a small skin sample (biopsy) is needed.

How is it treated?

There is no known cure for this disease. If symptoms are hard to control, a strong topical steroid cream may be needed. Once it is better, a non-steroid cream can often be used on a regular basis. The childhood version of this disease often goes away within one to ten years. Most patients out grow the condition before or at the start of puberty.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.