

Lichen Planus

What is lichen planus (LP)?

- Lichen planus is a skin condition of purple or reddish-purple, flat bumps.
- There may be white scales or flakes on the bumps.
- It can occur on any part of the body, but is most often found on the inner wrists, forearms, ankles, genital area or in the mouth. It can also affect the nails and scalp. If it is on the scalp, it may also cause hair loss.
- Most often, the areas are itchy. They are normally not painful unless an area has turned into an open sore from scratching.
- It normally lasts 1 to 2 years. Sometimes it will last longer. It may come and go. As it heals, a dark brown area may be left on the skin. The brown area will go away on its own, but may take several months to years.

What causes it?

There is no specific cause of LP. It may be related to the immune system or an allergic reaction. Sometimes, it may be set off by certain medicines. It is important to report any medicines being taken.

How is it diagnosed?

It is diagnosed by a doctor called a dermatologist who looks at the skin. In some cases, a biopsy may need to be done. A biopsy is when a small sample of the tissue is taken and looked at under a microscope in the lab.

How is it treated?

- Lichen planus is not curable. It may go away on its own within 1 to 2 years.
- Steroids may be used on the skin (topical) for itching. Oral antihistamines may be prescribed for the itching. Rarely, other types of oral medicines are used.
- Light therapy may be prescribed in severe cases.
- Sunscreen should be used when your child is outside.
- All products used on the skin should be free of fragrance.

ALERT: Call the doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if there are any 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.