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Lichen planus

Sources: www.sundhed.dk

<https://www.sundhed.dk/borger/patienthaandbogen/kvindesygdomme/sygdomme/oevrige-sygdomme/lichen-planus-vulvovaginal/>

Facts

- Vulvovaginal lichen planus is a rare, chronic inflammation that affects the labia and vagina

Typical symptoms are:

- Pain
- Burning sensation
- Prolonged itching
- Bleeding after intercourse (contact bleeding)
- Pain during intercourse
- If the vagina is attacked, you may have significant amounts of discharge, which may be mixed with blood

Treatment

- The symptoms can be relieved with different types of medication
- It can become a chronic disease in which the labia shrink and scar tissue develops
- In some cases, the vagina may become shortened as a result of the inflammation

What is vulvovaginal lichen planus?

The vulva is the woman's external genitalia with clitoris as well as the large and the small labia. The vagina is the vagina. Vulvovaginal disease is therefore a disorder that sits in the labia and vagina. Lichen planus is a chronic inflammatory condition that is likely to be autoimmune. Lichen planus is also called lichen ruber due to the reddish changes.

There are three different variants of the disease:

- Erosive lichen planus - the most common variant
- Papulosquamous lichen planus
- Hypertrophic lichen planus

What are the symptoms of lichen planus?

The symptoms of lichen planus, which sits in the labia and vagina, are:

- Pain
- Burning sensation
- Prolonged itching
- Bleeding after intercourse (contact bleeding)
- Pain during intercourse

If the vagina is attacked, you can have significant amounts of discharge, which may be mixed with blood.

In the early stages of the disease, you get blue-violet shiny wounds with a net-like surface and white spots.



If the disease develops further, one can get sores on the mucous membranes, and gradually the appearance of the labia and the vaginal entrance can change.

In up to 70% of cases, the inflammation also causes changes in the vagina. It manifests itself by abundant yellowish or bloody discharge.

Both intercourse and gynecological examination can be painful or impossible to perform.

What symptoms should you pay special attention to?

You should always see a doctor if you bleed after intercourse (contact bleeding).

How is the diagnosis made?

In order to make a definite diagnosis and to rule out other diseases, a tissue sample (biopsy) must be taken from the skin changes in the crotch. The tissue sample is subsequently examined under a microscope. Unfortunately, it is not always possible to make an accurate diagnosis.

Some also get changes in the lining of the gums. Changes in the oral cavity and the crotch can occur independently of each other.

Why do you get lichen planus?

The cause of the disease is unknown. It is not an infection with bacteria or viruses. The most widely accepted theory is that the disease is due to an autoimmune mechanism, which causes the body's own immune cells to attack the skin and mucous membranes of the labia and vagina.

Infects lichen planus?

Lichen planus is not contagious.

Is lichen planus hereditary?

Lichen planus is not known to be hereditary.

How to treat lichen planus?

Lichen planus is treated with products that contain cortisone and with local anesthetics. There are newer treatment methods that dampen the immunological response.

One can not cure lichen planus. Therefore, the purpose of treatment is to prevent the disease from getting worse and to relieve the discomfort.

The symptoms may become chronic, but there is a good chance of reducing the symptoms.

Local treatment of labia and vagina

The treatment should begin with a strong-acting cortisone ointment or cream, which is applied directly to the affected areas, which can be both labia or vaginal. Apply the product twice daily and continue treatment until the active onset has subsided.

Local anesthetics can be used to soothe itching and discomfort.

In milder cases, lubricate yourself with less powerful agents at bedtime. The treatment is gradually reduced.

It can be effective to use suppositories with hydrocortisone to treat vaginal discomfort. One can also smear steroid cream on a vaginal tampon and put it up in the vagina.

Treatment with tablets

If topical treatment is not sufficient, it may be necessary to try treatment with cortisone tablets, e.g. prednisone 40-60 mg daily for 2-4 weeks.



What can I do?

- Avoid tights, wear self-fitting socks
- Avoid synthetic underwear, wear cotton underwear
- Avoid tight pants, wear loose pants skirt or dress
- Avoid perfume-containing products, use ph neutral intimate soap
- Avoid washcloths, use fingertips for washing and dry with a flap

How do I avoid getting or worsening lichen planus?

You can not do anything yourself to prevent lichen planus. If you have it, it is important not to scratch it.

How does the disease develop?

Symptoms may subside over time. However, it is important to follow up on the treatment. It is recommended that women with lichen planus go for check-ups at least once a year for life.

It is a good idea to look even with a mirror once in a while.

Exacerbation of the symptoms, a new change in the skin, or a wound that does not heal, should be examined by a doctor, as a change in the cells may develop into cancer. However, it is rare.

Lichen planus can be associated with the risk of getting a metabolic disease. At diagnosis, it should be checked with a blood sample.

Lichen planus can become chronic and cause the labia or vagina to shrink, resulting in scar tissue that may require dilator treatment in rare cases. The vaginal entrance and labia can also change appearance.

Is lichen planus dangerous?

It has been considered whether there is a very small risk of it developing malignantly, but it has not been shown for sure.

How frequent is lichen planus?

Most women between the ages of 30 and 60 have vulvovaginal lichen planus. But lichen planus is rare compared to lichen sclerosus, with which it can be confused.

Can I get lichen planus more than once?

Lichen planus is a chronic disorder.