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Lichen sclerosus

Sources: www.sundhed.dk

<https://www.sundhed.dk/borger/patienthaandbogen/hud/sygdomme/kloeende-lidelser/lichen-sclerosus-et-atrophicus/>

Facts

- In lichen sclerosus et atrophicus, the mucous membranes of the genitals become sore, burning and itchy, and a whitish discoloration and shrinkage are seen.
- Lichen sclerosus is a rare skin condition that is especially seen in middle-aged women, but it can also be seen in little girls and men.
- Can be treated with strong adrenal cortex hormone creams
- In rare cases, the disease may be a precursor to cancer in the affected area

What is lichen sclerosus et atrophicus?

It is a skin disease that typically starts with whitish, spotted changes at the genitals and around the rectal opening.

The changes in the skin cause itching and soreness, and eventually the skin can become thin, whitish and wrinkled.

The condition most commonly occurs in postmenopausal women. It is less common in children (especially girls) before puberty and in men.

What symptoms and signs does the condition give?

Typical nuisances are itching, burning and tenderness at the genitals. Pain during intercourse is common.

The visible changes in the skin are thin, white and wrinkled skin. There may be a shrinkage of the tissue and the vaginal entrance may narrow.

There may also be spots with thickened skin and color changes from white to gray.

What symptoms should you pay special attention to?

If there are sores, the changes should be assessed by a doctor. The same is true for chronically thickened, discolored areas of the mucosa.

How is the diagnosis made?

The medical history and the typical skin changes often give suspicion of the diagnosis.

Lichen sclerosus et atrophicus may look like a fungal infection, but no improvement is achieved with fungal treatment.

Your doctor, gynecologist or dermatologist can take a tissue sample, and microscopy of the tissue sample will most certainly be able to provide the diagnosis.

Why do you get lichen sclerosus et atrophicus?

Perceived as an autoimmune disease. May in rare cases develop into skin cancer in the area concerned (less than 5% of cases).

Infects lichen sclerosus et atrophicus?

Lichen sclerosus et atrophicus is not contagious.



Is lichen sclerosus et atrophicus a dangerous disease?

Lichen sclerosus et atrophicus is an annoying, but often harmless, disease. But in almost 5%, the disease develops into skin cancer / mucosal cancer.

What treatment is there?

The goal of treatment is to alleviate the symptoms of the disease and prevent the changes from spreading. There is no treatment that can cure lichen sclerosus et atrophicus.

Using a moisturizer can reduce the discomfort.

Comfortable loose clothing in cotton is preferred by most, and tight, tight-fitting clothing should be avoided.

Sexual abstinence does not cause the disease to go away, but may of course be necessary for a period of time if the disease causes pain during intercourse.

Often the condition is treated with strong creams with adrenal cortex hormone which is used for about 2 months, after which you step out of the treatment.

Estrogen or testosterone cream does not help.

If the symptoms persist, there are other possible treatments that can be taken by a dermatologist or gynecologist.

Surgery is only rarely considered, but in the few cases where the disease causes adhesions or significant shrinkage, eg at the vaginal entrance, a surgical procedure may remedy this.

What can I do?

Loose clothing and frequent use of moisturizer reduce the discomfort.

How do I avoid getting or worsening lichen sclerosus atrophicus?

You can not prevent lichen sclerosus et atrophicus from occurring.

Early treatment can alleviate the genes and possibly prevent the disease from developing further.

When should I seek help?

It is a good idea to seek treatment early in the process so that you can prevent adhesions.

You should see a doctor if there are sores or thickenings in the mucous membrane.

How does the disease develop?

In less than 5%, the condition can develop into skin cancer in the affected area. It is a relatively peaceful form of cancer that can be treated, but it is important to detect the condition early in the course. Therefore, patients with lichen sclerosus et atrophicus are advised to have annual check-ups by their doctor (dermatologist or gynecologist).

In children, a milder course of the disease can generally be expected, and many grow completely from the disease.

The treatment of lichen sclerosus et atrophicus does not cure you, but in most people the treatment will be able to relieve the symptoms so that the disease does not become a problem.

How common is lichen sclerosus et atrophicus?

The frequency of the disease is not known, but it is probably rare.

Can I get lichen sclerosus atrophicus more than once?

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If you have lichen sclerosus et atrophicus, the disease is chronic. It can stabilize and come in calm phase, but new outbreaks can always occur.