

Questions

If you have any other questions that have not been answered by this leaflet, please ask the doctor when you next attend an appointment.

Contact details

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Monday to Thursday, 8.30am - 5pm
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Out of these working hours please contact:
Luton and Dunstable Hospital out of hours service ☎ **01582 491166**
and **ask for the maxillofacial doctor on call.**

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Patient Information

Oral Lichen Planus

Oral and Maxillofacial Department



Introduction

The purpose of this leaflet is to help you understand oral lichen planus.

What is lichen planus?

Lichen planus is a long lasting condition that can affect various parts of the body. In the mouth it is called **oral lichen planus**, and can be accompanied by Lichen planus in other areas of the body. Most people with this condition are not aware of it.

What are the signs and symptoms of oral lichen planus?

The most common appearance of oral lichen planus is white lacy patches on the lining of the mouth. The cheeks, tongue and gums can also be affected. This does not usually cause discomfort.

Another common appearance of oral lichen planus is raw redness of an area of the gums and blistering (although blistering is very rare) which can cause discomfort. In this instance you may find it uncomfortable to eat hot or spicy foods.

What causes oral lichen planus?

In most patients the cause of oral lichen planus is unknown.

Occasionally, it can be due to a reaction to medicines such as some painkillers, diabetic drugs or high blood pressure tablets. No alterations to taking these drugs should be made without seeking the advice of your doctor first.

Lichen planus isn't infectious, doesn't usually run in families and can't be passed on to others.

Who is affected?

Lichen planus is thought to affect 1-2% of the worldwide population and is more common in adults over the age of 40.

Lichen planus of the skin affects men and women equally, however, oral lichen planus is more common in women. The mouth is affected in around 50% of all cases of lichen planus (oral lichen planus).

How is oral lichen planus diagnosed?

Oral lichen planus can have a similar appearance to other disorders. Usually a biopsy is performed to confirm diagnosis.

A biopsy is a simple procedure which is carried out under local anaesthetic. It involves the removal of a small piece of mouth tissue that is affected, which is then examined under a microscope. The area usually heals within 7-10 days.

Is there a cure?

There is no known cure. The appearance of white lines on the lining of the mouth does not usually go away. Treatment is necessary only when there is pain or discomfort.

What treatments are available?

In cases of pain or discomfort, your doctor or dentist can prescribe mouthwashes.

How long will the pain last?

This varies from patient to patient so no definitive timescale can be given.

Can I prevent oral lichen planus?

As the cause is unknown, it is not possible to stop oral lichen planus from developing. The following precautions can help to maintain a healthy mouth:

- Avoid smoking.
- Avoid large quantities of alcohol.
- Eat a well balanced diet including fresh fruits and vegetables.

Everyone, whether they have oral lichen planus or not, should clean their teeth twice daily with a fluoride toothpaste and have their teeth and gums checked by a dentist regularly so that the linings of the mouth can be monitored.