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**Lichen Planus**



**Patient information**

# **Lichen Planus**



**Excellent patient care, together**

This leaflet has been designed to improve your understanding of your forthcoming treatment and has answers to many of the commonly asked questions. Please ask if you have any other questions would like further explanation please ask.

### **What is lichen planus?**

A longstanding inflammatory condition that can affect the lining of the mouth as well as the skin. The cause is not fully understood. Sometimes weakness in body's immune system; sometimes reaction to local factors like medication, metal fillings, toothpastes or foods. It is common and affects up to 2% of the population. Most frequently in middle age, and women are affected slightly more frequently than men. Although there is no known cure, treatment can be given to make symptoms better.

### **What does it look like?**

It is usually found on the insides of the cheeks and on the side of the tongue although it can also affect the gums and the roof of the mouth. There are varying degrees of appearance from white streaks to thickened patches. Sometimes with redness and ulceration. Often the patches are symmetrical.

### **What lichen planus is not**

- It is **not** cancer but 1-3% of aggressive cases can have a malignant change
- It is not inherited, that is passed on from your parents,
- It is not contagious, you cannot "catch it" from someone who has it or give it to somebody else,
- It is not related to nutrition although some foods you eat can make the patches of lichen planus sore.

### **How is lichen planus diagnosed?**

The appearance of lichen planus is usually typical and can be diagnosed by careful examination by a specialist. The diagnosis sometimes needs confirmation with a biopsy (ie removal of a small amount of tissue which can then be looked at closely under a microscope).

### **How is lichen planus treated?**

If it is not causing you any problems it does not require treatment. If it is causing discomfort, treatments for example, corticosteroids can be applied topically to lessen the symptoms.

### **Is there anything else I can do?**

- Keep a diary to look for trigger events if you have a flare-up of symptoms. These flare-ups may be related to particular foods, stress or local trauma.
- Avoid alcohol, citrus, spices and benzoates (e.g. tomatoes) in diet
- Use a SLS (Sodium lauryl sulphate) FREE toothpaste
- Benzydamine hydrochloride (Diffiam) mouthwash or spray can help aid comfort
- Some lichen planus can be related to amalgam (metal fillings). If this is the case for you, it may be suggested that a filling is replaced with a different material by your dentist.

### Will I always have lichen planus?

- This is difficult to say. Some people suffer for only a few months before their symptoms settle down. Others may suffer for several years.
- Once the symptoms disappear, they may or may not return at a later date.

### How to contact us

#### Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery

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Taken from The British Association of Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeons website. [www.baoms.org.uk](http://www.baoms.org.uk)

## PALS

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Department	Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery
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