

## Lichen Sclerosis – Information for women

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**Tena koutou katoa, Kia orana, Talofa lava, Malo e lelei, Fakaalofa lahi atu, Taloha Ni, Ni Sa Bula  
Vinaka,  
Greetings and Welcome to National Women's**

### **What is a Lichen sclerosis?**

Lichen sclerosis is a skin disease affecting both sexes of all ages and in all areas of the body. It is more common in the female and most often occurs on the genital area.

The lesions of lichen sclerosis are white, but can be speckled with pigmentation, and haemorrhage under the skin is common. When the vulva (the skin around the entrance to the vagina) is affected, itching which can be severe is often present. This can result in bleeding or thickening of the skin. However some women have mild or no symptoms but the white skin changes are visible. There may be loss of normal vulval tissue in some women.

Some patients have white lesions of lichen sclerosis elsewhere on their skin surface, but these do not usually cause symptoms.

In some patients there is a family history of lichen sclerosis and there is an increased risk of thyroid disease and other autoimmune diseases.

### **Treatment:**

The best treatment is a three month course of a strong steroid ointment or cream, such as Dermol. This should be applied once daily for one month, then on alternate days for another month, and finally twice a week for the third month. One 30g tube of cream or ointment should last for the three month course of treatment. With this regular use, the changes in the skin can be reversed in some patients and in almost all the itching is relieved soon after treatment is commenced.

After three months of treatment, the steroid ointment can be used infrequently, whenever the itching recurs. This may be once a week or only once every two or three months. Some patients have concerns about the use of steroid preparations on their skin, particularly thinning of the skin, but this does not appear to be a problem in lichen sclerosis.

Regular follow up is recommended because rarely a precancerous or cancerous skin lesion will develop in vulval lichen sclerosis. This will be in the form of a lump, thickening or ulcer on the vulval skin. You should learn to examine the area yourself using a hand held mirror and your doctor should inspect the area once a year.