



# Lichen planus

## Information for patients from the Oral and Maxillofacial Department

This leaflet explains the following.

- What lichen planus is and what it looks like.
- How lichen planus is diagnosed and treated.
- What you can do to try and help with your symptoms.

We hope this leaflet answers some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a member of your healthcare team.

### What is lichen planus?

Lichen planus is an inflammatory condition. It can affect the lining of the mouth as well as the skin. The cause is not fully understood, but it affects up to 2 in every 100 members of the population.

Lichen planus is most common in middle age, and women are affected slightly more than men. Although there is no known cure, treatment can be given to make the symptoms better.

### What does it look like?

In the mouth, lichen planus is usually found on the inside of the cheeks and on the side of the tongue. It can also affect the gums and roof of the mouth.

Usually lichen planus has a lace-like pattern of streaky white patches. The patches can occasionally thicken. Often patches are:

- symmetrical and affect the same site on different sides of the mouth; or
- may be linked with red patches or soreness.



Mouth lichen planus

## What lichen planus is not

- It is not a cancer.
- It is not inherited (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 linked to nutrition or diet. However, some foods can make the patches of lichen planus sore.

## How is lichen planus diagnosed?

What lichen planus looks like is usually typical. It can be diagnosed by an experienced doctor just by looking inside your mouth.

The diagnosis sometimes needs to be confirmed with a biopsy. During a biopsy a small amount of tissue is removed, and looked at under a microscope. The biopsy is carried out in the Maxillofacial Department as a minor oral surgery procedure. You will be given local anaesthetic, which numbs the area but you remain awake. Your doctor will discuss this with you at your outpatient appointment.

## How is lichen planus treated?

If lichen planus is not causing you any problems it does not need treatment, however it may be closely monitored.

If lichen planus is causing you problems, such as soreness, treatments can be given to make the symptoms better. Usually these treatments are mouth rinses or tablets.

## Is there anything else I can do?

- You may find it helpful to keep a diary. Look for trigger events if you have a flare-up of symptoms. These flare-ups may be related to when you eat particular foods or are stressed.
- You may find it useful to change to a milder form of toothpaste that does not contain Sodium Lauryl Sulphate. Remember you must continue to brush your teeth as good oral hygiene is very important.
- A similar condition called lichenoid reaction, can look like lichen planus. The condition can be found in areas of the mouth close to dental restorations (fillings). If this is the case for you, it may be suggested that a filling is replaced.

## 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.

## Further information

If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to your GP.

### What do you think of this leaflet?

We welcome feedback, whether positive or negative, as it helps us to improve our care and services.

If you would like to give us feedback about this leaflet, please fill in our short online survey. Either scan the QR code below, or use the web link. We do not record your personal information, unless you provide contact details and would like to talk to us some more.

#### Giving feedback about this leaflet



<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/MDOBU4/>

If you would rather talk to someone instead of filling in a survey, please call the Patient Voice Team.

- **Patient Voice Team**

Telephone: 01227 868605

Email ([ekhuft.patientvoice@nhs.net](mailto:ekhuft.patientvoice@nhs.net))

**This leaflet has been produced with and for patients.**

**Please let us know:**

- If you have any accessibility needs; this includes needing a hearing loop or wanting someone to come with you to your appointment.
- If you need an interpreter.
- If you need this information in another format (such as Braille, audio, large print or Easy Read).

**You can let us know this by:**

- Visiting the Trust web site (<https://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/ais>).
- Calling the number at the top of your appointment letter.
- Adding this information to the Patient Portal (<https://pp.ekhuft.nhs.uk/login>).
- Telling a member of staff at your next appointment.

**Any complaints, comments, concerns or compliments**, please speak to a member of your healthcare team. Or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service on 01227 783145 or email ([ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net)).

**Patients should not bring large sums of money or valuables into hospital.** Please note that East Kent Hospitals accepts no responsibility for the loss or damage to personal property, unless the property has been handed into Trust staff for safe-keeping.

**Further patient information leaflets** are available via the East Kent Hospitals' web site (<https://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/patient-information>).

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