

Lichen Planus

What is it?

Lichen Planus is a condition affecting the tissues inside your mouth, where the gums and insides of the cheeks vary from feeling merely rough to the touch, to extreme sensations such as burning or general soreness because of ulceration.

What causes it and how is it treated?

It is unclear the cause of this disorder, but it is believed to have an autoimmune component. Because of this, steroids are often used to treat the symptoms. It is important to understand that Lichen Planus will not be cured, but can be controlled with steroid use. In this office, we can use topical steroids. If this is not sufficient to improve the condition, then your physician would be involved to help administer systemic steroids as that is outside the scope of this practice.

There are several things listed below that can make your Lichen Planus worse, and should be avoided or discontinued in order to help resolve your discomfort.

- Chocolate
- Cinnamon (including chewing gum, soda pop, etc)
- Acidic foods (pickles, tomatoes, orange juice, wine, etc)
- Certain preservatives (benzoates, pyrophosphates) found in toothpastes/ mouth rinses or canned foods
- Smoking
- Stress

Sometimes an allergic reaction may be working in the background to make your Lichen Planus worse. An evaluation by your dermatologist with possible patch testing will help you to determine if you have an existing allergy, or are developing a new one. Remember, allergies can develop at any time, even if you've never had a problem in the past. Allergies can be a reaction to foods, medications/ chemicals, or materials (metals, porcelain, whitening agents). It may be necessary to visit with your physician to alter or change the medications you are taking in order to reduce your symptoms.

In addition, because your body is a beautifully complex machine, certain deficiencies or disorders can also contribute to worsening your condition such as:

- Vitamin B deficiency
- Estrogen deficiency
- Thyroid deficiency
- Cancer chemotherapy or anything that would reduce immune function (HIV/ AIDS)
- Saliva deficiency (dry mouth)
- Uncontrolled Diabetes

What if it doesn't hurt?

The area should still be monitored for negative changes as the possibility of cancerous transformation is not impossible, although it is rare. Biopsies should be taken every few years in areas where the lesions are persistent or do not resolve with treatment.