



**Bradford Teaching Hospitals**  
NHS Foundation Trust

Maxillofacial Unit • Patient Information Leaflet

# Advice for Patients with Lichen Planus



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*This leaflet has been designed to improve your understanding of your forthcoming treatment and answers to many of the commonly asked questions. If you have any other questions that the leaflet does not answer or would like further explanation please ask.*

## What is Lichen Planus?

- It is an inflammatory condition that can affect the lining of your mouth as well as the skin.
- The cause is not fully understood.
- It is common and affects about 2% of the population.
- It is more frequent in middle age and women are affected slightly more frequently than men.
- Although there is no known cure treatment can be given to make improve symptoms.

## What does it look like?

- In the mouth it is usually found on the cheeks and sides of the tongue, although it can affect the gums and roof of your mouth.
- It usually has a lace like pattern of streaky white patches that occasionally can be thickened.
- Often the patches are symmetrical i.e. affect the same site on different parts of your mouth.
- Sometimes it is associated with red patches or sores.

## What Lichen Planus is not.

- It is not cancer.
- It is not inherited i.e. passed on from your parents.
- It is not contagious i.e. you cannot catch it from someone who has it or give it to someone 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 an experienced doctor just by looking inside your mouth. The diagnosis sometimes needs confirmation with a biopsy (i.e. removal of a small amount of tissue which can then be looked at closely under a microscope).

## How is Lichen Planus treated?

If you are not having problems treatment isn't required although you may be kept under review. If you are having pain/problems treatments can be given to lessen the symptoms. Usually these are given directly to the affected area (topically) rather than having tablets to swallow).

## Is there anything else I can do?

- Try using milder toothpaste. Avoid one that contains the component "Sodium Lauryl Sulphate"- check on the label.
- Avoid spicy foods or foods that aggravate the lesions.
- Some lichen planus may be related to fillings or crowns you have in your mouth. If this is the case it may be suggested that it is removed, however this is very rare.
- If you smoke or chew tobacco, try to give up. A very small proportion of these lesions can turn to cancer, particularly if you continue to smoke or use tobacco products this may increase your risk.

## Will I always have Lichen Planus?

Some people suffer for only a few months before the symptoms settle down. Others may suffer for several years. Once the symptoms disappear they may or may not return at a later date.

## Wristbands

When you are in hospital it is essential to wear a wristband at all times to ensure your safety during your stay.

The wristband will contain accurate details about you on it including all of the essential information that staff need to identify you correctly and give you the right care. All hospital patients including babies, children and older people should wear the wristband at all times.

If you do not have a wristband whilst in hospital, please ask a member of staff for one. If it comes off or is uncomfortable, ask a member of staff to replace it.

## Smoking

Bradford Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust is a smoke-free organisation. You are not permitted to smoke or use e-cigarettes in any of the hospital buildings or grounds.

If you need this information in another format or language, please ask a member of staff to arrange this for you.

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