

LICHEN SIMPLEX CHRONICUS (LSC)

Lichen simplex chronicus is a form of eczema in the skin. It produces red inflamed scaling and itching areas. The first part of the word lichen refers to the fact that the area is slightly raised. The second part of the word simplex means it is the simple form of the condition. The third word chronicus refers to the fact that the problem tends to be present for many months or in some cases years.

The exact cause of lichen simplex is unknown. In many cases the problem, which caused the original skin condition, has long since gone away. The original condition, however, set up a pattern where the skin was itched and scratched. This caused more itching and more scratching. Eventually this creates an itch/scratch cycle, which allows the condition to persist. This is despite the fact that the original problem is gone. In many cases, nerves and stress contribute to this itch/scratch cycle.

Patches of lichen simplex can be seen in any area of the body. Some of the more common areas are the neck, private area, and around the ankles. Some patients have only one spot on the skin. Some patients have a large number of areas.

Lichen simplex is not a sign of an internal problem. It is not a sign of cancer or any contagious skin problem.

Fortunately, lichen simplex can be controlled in most cases. There is no true cure for the problem but medication I prescribe often helps significantly. Treatments include various creams, which are applied to the skin, pills, which control the itching part of the problem, and injections into the affected areas. I will determine what is the best treatment for your individual case.

Lichen simplex can be a frustrating condition but in most cases therapy is available which helps significantly in treating it. If you have any other questions regarding this problem, please ask me before you leave the office.