
NECROBIOSIS LIPOIDICA DIABETICORUM (NLD)

Necrobiosis lipoidica diabetorum (NLD) is a disease of unknown origin. More than half of affected patients have diabetes but many patients with necrobiosis lipoidica do not have diabetes. Skin lesions may occur before the onset of diabetes and most commonly appear in the third and fourth decade of life. Women are affected more frequently than men and the front of the shins are the most common places involved. In some cases other parts of the body such as the abdomen and arm can be involved but this is uncommon.

Often, skin changes start out as reddish patches and slowly expand with time. The center turns yellow brown and at some point may take on a waxy appearance and even form sores that bleed. The diagnosis can be made due to the characteristic appearance of NLD but at other times a skin biopsy may be needed.

TREATMENT

Many types of treatment have been tried for necrobiosis lipoidica. Results are variable. Topical cortisone creams and ointments can often stop the growth of lesions. Sometimes injecting cortisone into the skin can also lead to improvement.

Other medicines that may be helpful include pentoxifylline (Trental), which helps prompt circulation, and aspirin, which prevents blood clotting. Some scientists feel that changes in small blood vessels in the skin are the cause of necrobiosis lipoidica.

One of the main aspects of treatment of NLD is the prevention of ulcers within the areas of involvement. The skin is sensitive and more prone to develop open sores. For this reason protecting the area as much as possible is helpful. If ulcers develop it is important to use the proper medication to speed the healing. This often involves soaking the area with lukewarm water and a washcloth and then applying a topical ointment. I will determine what the best treatment is in your case.

In rare cases cortisone medicines or stronger blood thinners need to be given by mouth. I will determine what the best treatment for your individual case of NLD. Please do not hesitate to ask me any questions before you leave the office.