



LICHEN SIMPLEX CHRONICUS

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Lichen simplex chronicus is a localized form of lichenified (thickened, inflamed) atopic dermatitis or eczema that occurs in well defined plaques. It is the result of ongoing, chronic rubbing and scratching of the skin in localized areas. It is generally seen in patients greater than 20 years of age and is more frequent in women. Emotional stress can play a part in the course of this skin disease. There is mainly one symptom: itching. The rubbing and scratching that occurs in response to the itch can become automatic and even unconscious making it very difficult to treat. It can be magnified by seeming innocuous stimuli such as putting on clothes, or clothes rubbing the skin which makes the skin warmer resulting in increased itch sensation. The lesions themselves are generally very well defined areas of thickened, erythematous, raised area of skin. Frequently they are linear, oval or round in shape. Sites of predilection include the back of the neck, ankles, lower legs, upper thighs, forearms and the genital areas. They can be single lesions or multiple.

This can be a very difficult condition to treat much less resolve. It is of utmost importance that the scratching and rubbing of the skin must stop. Treatment is usually initiated with **topical corticosteroids** for larger areas and **intralesional steroids** might also be considered for small lesion(s). If the patient simply cannot keep from rubbing the area an occlusive dressing might be considered to keep the skin protected from probing fingers. Since this is not a histamine driven itch phenomena oral **antihistamines** are generally of little use in these cases.

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