

# Patient information leaflet

## Department of Gynaecology Services

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### Lichen Sclerosus in Women

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#### What is lichen sclerosis?

Lichen sclerosis is a chronic inflammatory skin condition which can affect any part of the skin, but in females it most often affects the vulval skin and the skin around the anus. It can start in childhood or adulthood and affect girls or women of any age.

#### What causes lichen sclerosis?

The cause of lichen sclerosis is not fully understood. It is felt to be a type of autoimmune condition in which the person's immune system reacts against the skin for no obvious reason.

Lichen sclerosis is not due to an infection – the disease is not contagious, so sexual partners cannot pick it up.

Friction or damage to the skin can bring out lichen sclerosis and make it worse.

#### Is lichen sclerosis hereditary?

Rarely, lichen sclerosis can occur in relatives.

#### What are the symptoms of lichen sclerosis?

Many patients have none, but the most common symptom of lichen sclerosis is itching. As a rule the patches on the general skin surface seldom itch much, but those in the genital area do, and can also be sore if the skin breaks down or cracks. In the genital area, the scar-like process can tighten the skin, and this can interfere with urination and with sexual