



Can I stop myself getting oral lichen planus?



As the cause is usually not known it is impossible to stop oral lichen planus happening.

To avoid the risk of serious disease of the lining of your mouth:

- **don't** smoke
- **don't** drink large amounts of alcohol
- **do** have a diet with plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables.

Everyone, whether they have oral lichen planus or not, should clean their teeth regularly twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste. They should also have their teeth and gums checked regularly by a dentist so that any changes in the lining of the mouth can easily be spotted.



British
Dental Health
Foundation

The British Dental Health Foundation is an independent, UK-based charity dedicated to promoting the benefits of good oral health to the public throughout the world.

The Foundation promotes three key messages:

- brush your teeth for two minutes twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste.
- cut down on how often you have sugary foods and drinks.
- visit your dentist regularly, as often as they recommend.



Look for our 'Approved' symbol on oral health products. You can trust these products to live up to the claims on their packaging.

The Dental Helpline is the Foundation's own confidential advice service. Qualified dental professionals are available to answer your questions personally from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. Or you can send us a question by email from our website at any time.

 **Dental
Helpline**
0845 063 1188
www.dentalhealth.org

It costs the Foundation £9 for every enquiry we answer. If you would like to make a donation, please send a cheque to the address below, or phone 01788 539793 to donate by credit or debit card.

*plain English
approved*
by the word centre

British Dental Health Foundation,
Smile House, 2 East Union Street, Rugby CV22 6AJ, UK.

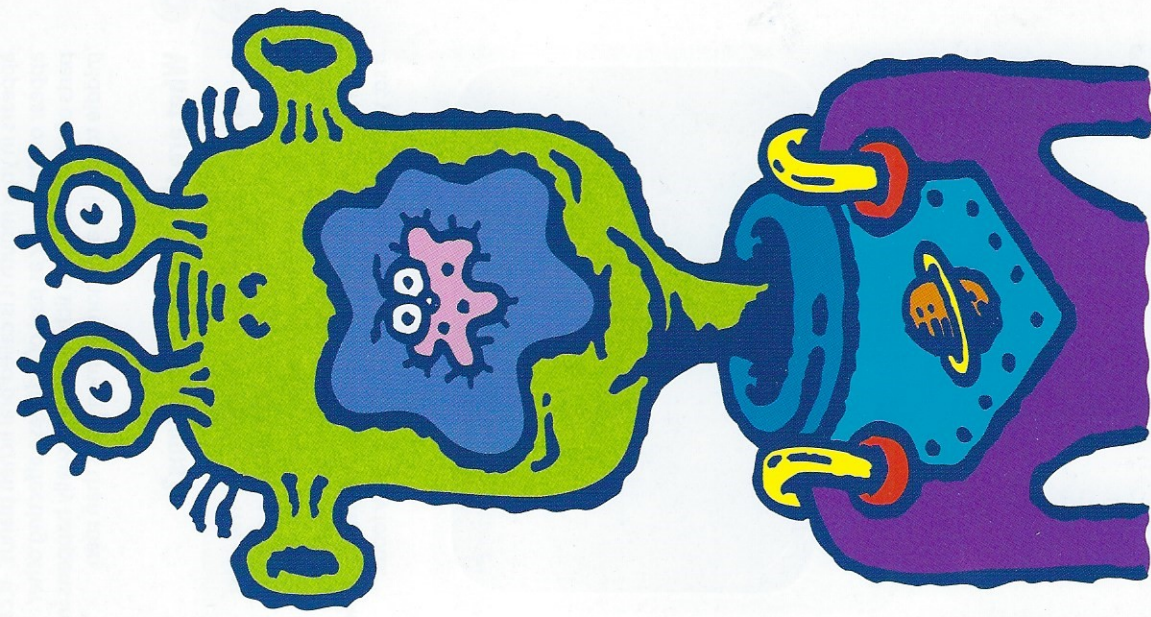
© British Dental Health Foundation

Printed 08/11



Tell me about

Lichen planus





Q What is oral lichen planus?

A Lichen planus is a long-lasting disease that can affect the mouth and sometimes other areas on the body. When it appears in your mouth it is called 'oral lichen planus'. It can appear on its own or as part of a disease affecting other parts of your body. Oral lichen planus usually happens in middle to late life and more women get it than men.

Q What are the signs and symptoms?

A Lichen planus shows in many different ways. The most common signs are white patches on the lining of your mouth (usually your cheeks, tongue and gums). These don't usually hurt, but sometimes there can be redness, ulcers or, very rarely, blistering as well as the white patches. If so, you may find it painful to eat hot or spicy foods.

Q What is the cause of oral lichen planus?

A We don't know the cause of lichen planus with most patients. It may be a sign of a mild weakness in the body's immune (defence) system, but patients with lichen planus are otherwise well. Occasionally it can be caused by a reaction to medicines such as some painkillers, diabetic treatments, drugs for high blood pressure, beta-blockers, gold, penicillamine and a number of other drugs.

A Oral lichen planus does not seem to be caused by an infection, nor does it run in families.

Q How is oral lichen planus diagnosed?

A Usually it will be diagnosed after a careful examination by a specialist. Because the signs and symptoms of oral lichen planus can be like those of some other disorders, a 'biopsy' is usually needed to be sure about the diagnosis. A biopsy is a very simple procedure, done under a local anaesthetic, where a small piece of tissue is removed from the mouth. The area usually heals within 7 to 10 days.

Q What is the treatment of oral lichen planus?

A Usually lichen planus only needs to be treated when there are painful symptoms. Sometimes patients with white patches that are not painful complain of a mild roughness of the lining of the mouth. But this usually does not need any treatment.

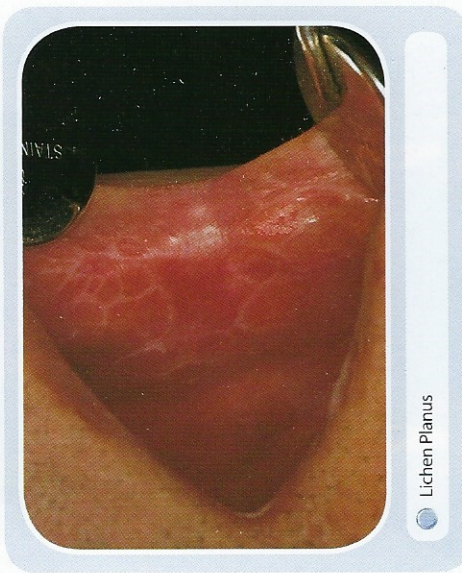
A When oral lichen planus does need treating, it is usually done by putting a corticosteroid cream on the area. Some areas may need other treatments, such as immunosuppressants applied to the area, and very rarely you might need to take a corticosteroid or other similar tablets.

Q Does oral lichen planus go away?

A Oral lichen planus generally never goes away. Patients will usually continue to have white patches on the lining of the mouth. Treatment will lessen the pain, although it is not usually possible to tell when painful periods are likely.

Q Are there any long-term complications of oral lichen planus?

A There may be some connection between oral lichen planus and cancer of the mouth in perhaps 1% to 3% of patients who have had the condition a long time. The exact connection between oral lichen planus and cancer is not certain, and only a very few patients with oral lichen planus ever have such complications.



Lichen Planus