

UNDERSTAND THE
CONNECTION BETWEEN*Sexual Health
& Dermatology*

by Shelly Crossman, DCNP, FNP-C, Owner, Dermatology & Skin Care by Shelly

Dermatological issues significantly can affect sexual health, and conversely, certain sexual health conditions may have dermatological manifestations.

Let's touch on a few dermatological conditions with a brief overview on how these fields can intersect and what you should know to maintain both your skin and sexual health.

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's) often present with visible symptoms that dermatology specialists are trained to recognize. For instance, herpes virus can cause painful sores around the genital or oral areas, while syphilis may lead to skin rashes and lesions. Human papillomavirus (HPV) is another STI that can manifest as warts on the genitals.

Timely diagnosis and treatment are essential to managing these conditions and preventing transmission.

Psoriasis and eczema may cause visible rash/lesions on skin and intimate areas. They can cause discomfort and sometimes

severe itching, which can affect a person's emotional well-being, confidence and sexual activity.

Lichen sclerosus et atrophicus (LSA) is a chronic skin condition that significantly can impact sexual health. Characterized by disfiguring white, thinning patches on the skin, typically in the genital and anal areas, LSA can cause itching, discomfort and pain during intercourse.

Early diagnosis and management by dermatology is crucial for controlling symptoms and preventing complications. Treatment for lichen sclerosus et atrophicus is individualized, and a combination of therapies may be needed to manage symptoms. Open communication with health care providers and partners can help address any sexual health concerns associated with LSA.

Treatments for this can include high-potency steroids to reduce inflammation and discomfort. Tacrolimus or pimecrolimus creams are used as an alternative or adjunct to steroids; analgesics and local anesthetics can help the pain associated with the condition, as well as other emollients that help with dryness, barrier function and discomfort.

In severe cases oral corticosteroids or immunosuppressive drugs might be considered as well as carbon dioxide laser and surgery. Counseling and support groups can be beneficial for coping with the emotional impact and improving quality of life.

There is help for all of these conditions. Ongoing follow up with your dermatology specialist is essential to monitor the progression of the conditions, adjust treatments and address any complications early.