

## PHOTO ESSAY

# An Atlas of Lumps and Bumps, Part 40: Lichen Nitidus

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## Lichen Nitidus

Lichen nitidus is an idiopathic chronic dermatosis characterized by minute, flesh-colored or hypopigmented, shiny papules commonly occurring on the abdomen, chest, genitalia, and extremities.<sup>1,2</sup> Although the exact incidence is not known, lichen nitidus is a rare dermatosis. The majority of cases occur in children and young adults.<sup>3,4</sup> The mean age of onset is around 8 years of age.<sup>5,6</sup> The occurrence of lichen nitidus during infancy is extremely rare.<sup>1</sup> The sex ratio is approximately equal.<sup>4,7</sup> There is no racial predilection.<sup>5,7</sup>

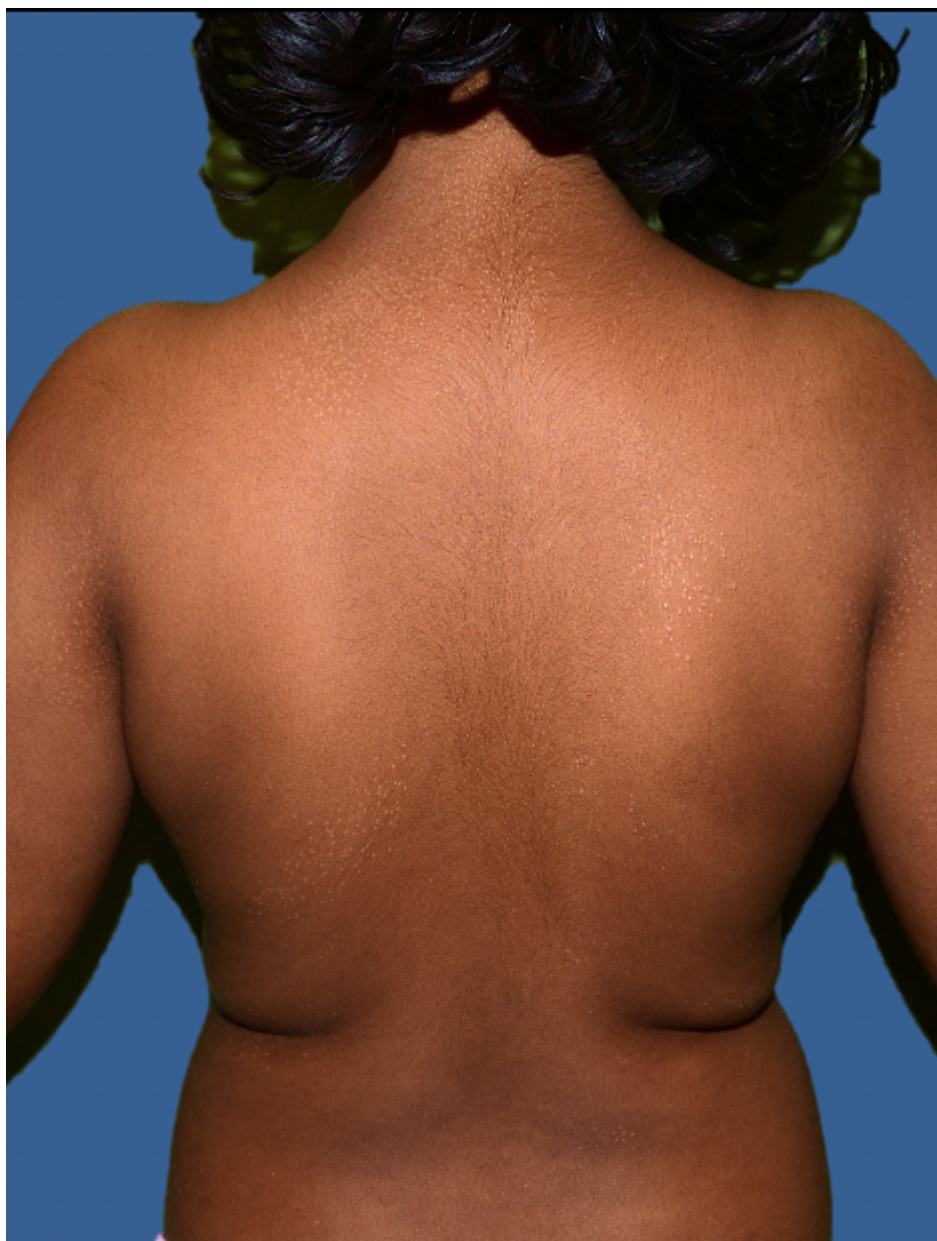
Lichen nitidus is more common in patients with lichen planus, lichen spinulosus, lichen striatus, vitiligo, psoriasis vulgaris, neurofibromatosis type 1, and erythema nodosum.<sup>4,5,8,9</sup> The condition has also been reported to occur following the use of certain medications (nivolumab, tremelimumab, mogamulizumab, ribavirin, interferon) and in patients after tattoos or trauma (Koebner phenomenon).<sup>4,7,10-12</sup> Other conditions associated with lichen nitidus include HIV infection, Crohn disease, Niemann-Pick disease, Down syndrome, and Silver-Russell syndrome.<sup>4,5,13-16</sup> Familial lichen nitidus has rarely been reported.<sup>1,17,18</sup> Leung and Ng reported identical twins with lesions of generalized lichen nitidus noted at two months of age.<sup>1</sup> The familial occurrence of lichen nitidus suggests a genetic component. It is possible that the genetic predisposition renders individuals susceptible to some environmental factors that induce a cell-mediated response, resulting in lymphocyte accumulation forming the discrete papules seen in lichen nitidus.<sup>4</sup>

Clinically, lichen nitidus presents as minute (1 to 2 mm in diameter), discrete, flat-topped, shiny papules, usually arranged in groups (**Figure 1**).<sup>1,7,19,20</sup> Occasionally, the lesions can be dome-shaped.<sup>20</sup>



**Figure 1.** *Lichen nitidus* presents as minute, discrete, flat-topped, shiny papules, usually arranged in groups

Although the lesions are often pink to tan brown or flesh-colored,<sup>4</sup> they may be hypopigmented in dark-skinned individual (**Figure 2**).<sup>20</sup> The lesions are usually asymptomatic but may be pruritic.<sup>20,21</sup> Sites of predilection include the chest, abdomen, genitalia, neck, and extremities.<sup>17,19,21</sup> Rarely, the palms, soles, oral mucous membrane, and nails may be involved.<sup>4,17</sup> Oral mucosal involvement often presents with flat, grayish papules on the oral mucosa while nail involvement may present with ridging, thickening/thinning, pitting, trachyonychia, and longitudinal grooving of the nail plate.<sup>22-24</sup> The disorder is most often localized but can become extensive or generalized.<sup>1,2,19,25</sup> Evidence of koebnerization, with grouping of the papules in a linear array, may be seen.<sup>20,21</sup>



**Figure 2.** The disorder is most often localized but can become extensive or generalized, with grouping of the papules in a linear array.

Several clinical variants have been recognized, namely, perforating lichen nitidus, linear lichen nitidus, confluent lichen nitidus, palmar/plantar lichen nitidus, hyperkeratotic and hypertrophic lichen nitidus, purpuric (hemorrhagic) lichen nitidus, actinic lichen nitidus, vesicular lichen nitidus, and follicular spinous lichen nitidus.<sup>26-32</sup>

The diagnosis of lichen nitidus is mainly clinical, based on its distinctive features. Typical dermoscopic features include smooth, white, well-circumscribed circles with a brown shadow.<sup>4,33</sup> *In vivo* reflectance confocal microscopy typically shows enlarged, well-circumscribed dermal papillae which are highly refractile.<sup>34</sup>

Lichen nitidus tends to resolve spontaneously within a few years.<sup>7</sup> Transient post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation at the site of the condition may occur.<sup>7</sup>

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## EDITOR'S NOTE:

This article is part of a series describing and differentiating dermatologic lumps and bumps. To access previously published articles in the series,

visit: <https://www.consultant360.com/resource-center/atlas-lumps-and-bumps>.

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