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Lichen nitidus on the dorsal tongue

Pedro Costa de Araujo, MD; Jérôme R. Lechien, MD

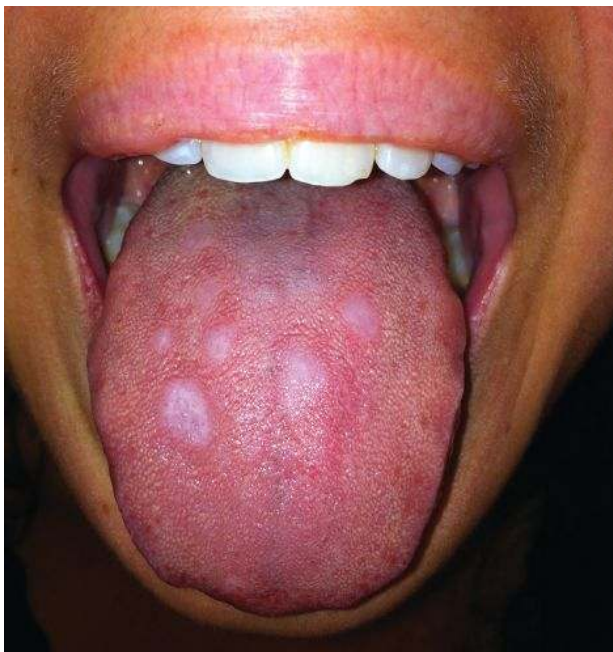


Figure. This case of lichen nitidus of the dorsal tongue is characterized by shiny, flat-topped, well-delineated papules.

A 24-year-old woman was admitted to the Department of Otolaryngology–Head and Neck Surgery with a 7-day history of round, whitish spots on the dorsum of her tongue (figure). No similar lesions were found elsewhere. Her general medical history and findings on clinical examination were unremarkable. The lesions did not burn and were not painful, nor did they cause any other discomfort.

Palpation of the tongue revealed flat-topped and well-delineated lesions. Histologic examination of a biopsy specimen found a circumscribed collection of inflammatory cells in the papillary dermis that reached the overlying epidermis. The patient was diagnosed with lichen nitidus. No treatment was deemed nec-

essary, and at the 6-month follow-up, the lesions had spontaneously disappeared.

Lichen nitidus, which manifests as shiny papules, is a relatively uncommon, asymptomatic, idiopathic inflammatory eruption usually found on the abdomen, pelvic area, or extremities.¹ Few cases involving the tongue have been previously described,^{2,3} and no case confined to the tongue without other lesions elsewhere has been reported.

The etiology and pathogenesis of lichen nitidus remain poorly understood.¹ Some authors have suggested that lichen nitidus could be associated with other pathologies such as segmental vitiligo, lichen spinulosus, lichen striatus, oral lichen planus, psoriasis vulgaris, multiple endocrine neoplasia, and erythema nodosum.^{1,4} None of these disorders was detected in our case. When lichen nitidus is not associated with a systemic disease or complications, its resolution remains spontaneous and does not require treatment.⁵

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