

## **MORPHEA**

Morphea, also known as localized scleroderma, is a somewhat uncommon skin condition in which the skin appears thick and white due to excess collagen production in the lower layers. Morphea lesions can occur in many different sizes and shapes. There may be multiple areas or you may never have more than one small spot of morphea.

Morphea is a localized condition which involves the skin. Occasionally, it can involve the nails and hair if it is in this area. It is not an indication of an underlying disease. Occasionally patients with morphea can experience joint aches again depending on the affected area. It is important to distinguish morphea or localized scleroderma from another condition called systemic scleroderma which is a more serious condition affecting internal organs. Patients with morphea do not have systemic scleroderma.

Morphea can begin in childhood or adulthood and is more common in woman than in men. It is not an inherited condition. The exact cause is unknown but it is felt to be a localized autoimmune skin problem where the body reacts against the skin producing the small white patches.

In some cases patients with morphea require a small skin test to have the affected area examined under the microscope. This is done by taking a small skin biopsy. It is not done to look for cancer but to determine the specific type of skin process. This type of information may be helpful in guiding treatment.

There is no single best therapy for morphea. In many cases treatment is not necessary since the problem can resolve on its own. In other cases topical medication is used to help decrease the local inflammation which may be causing the problem. There are various other treatments depending on the extent of your condition.

In general patients with morphea have a small number of lesions and it does not cause any significant health concerns. If you have any other questions regarding this condition please do not hesitate to ask before you leave the office.