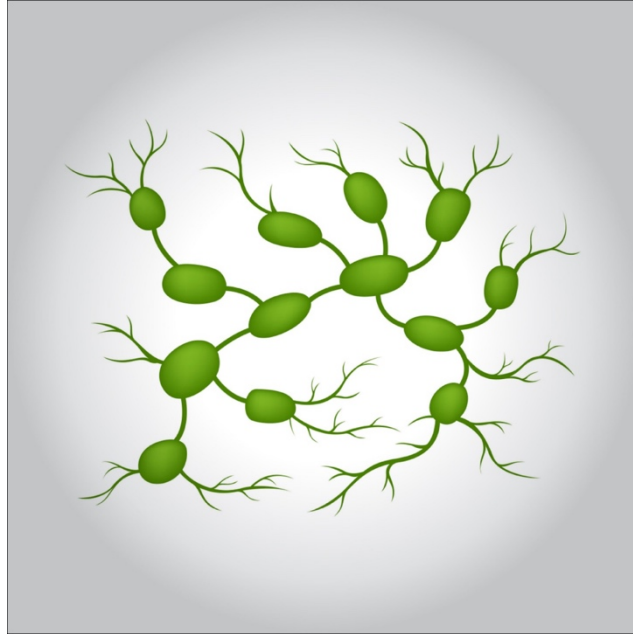


LYMPH NODES CANCER



Swollen lymph nodes usually occur as a result of infection from bacteria or viruses. Rarely, swollen lymph nodes are caused by cancer.

Your lymph nodes, also called lymph glands, play a vital role in your body's ability to fight off infections. They function as filters, trapping viruses, bacteria and other causes of illnesses before they can infect other parts of your body. Common areas where you might notice swollen lymph nodes include your neck, under your chin, in your armpits and in your groin.

In some cases, the passage of time and warm compresses may be all you need to treat swollen lymph nodes. If an infection causes swollen lymph nodes, treatment depends on the cause.

What are the symptoms?

Your lymphatic system is a network of organs, vessels and lymph nodes situated throughout your body. Many lymph nodes are located in your head and neck region. Lymph nodes that frequently swell are in this area, as well as in your armpits and groin area.

Swollen lymph nodes are a sign that something is wrong somewhere in your body. When your lymph nodes first swell, you might notice:

Tenderness and pain in the lymph nodes

Swelling that may be the size of a pea or kidney bean, or even larger in the lymph nodes

Depending on the cause of your swollen lymph nodes, other signs and symptoms you might have include:

Runny nose, sore throat, fever and other indications of an upper respiratory infection

General swelling of lymph nodes throughout your body. When this occurs, it may indicate an infection, such as HIV or

mononucleosis, or an immune system disorder, such as lupus or rheumatoid arthritis

Hard, fixed, rapidly growing nodes, indicating a possible cancer or lymphoma

What are the causes?

Lymph nodes are small, round or bean-shaped clusters of cells. Inside lymph nodes are a combination of different types of immune system cells. These specialized cells filter your lymphatic fluid as it travels through your body and protect you by destroying invaders.

Lymph nodes are located in groups, and each group drains a specific area of your body. You may be more likely to notice swelling in certain areas, such as in the lymph nodes in your neck, under your chin, in your armpits and in your groin. The site of the swollen lymph nodes may help identify the underlying cause.

The most common cause of swollen lymph nodes is an infection, particularly a viral infection, such as the common cold. Other possible causes of swollen lymph nodes include:

Common infections

- **Strep throat**
- **Measles**
- **Ear infections**
- **Infected (abscessed) tooth**
- **Mononucleosis**
- **Skin or wound infections, such as cellulitis**
- **Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) — the virus that causes AIDS**

Uncommon infections

- **Tuberculosis**
- **Certain sexually transmitted infections, such as syphilis**
- **Toxoplasmosis — a parasitic infection resulting from contact with the feces of an infected cat or eating undercooked meat**
- **Cat scratch fever — a bacterial infection from a cat scratch or bite**

Immune system disorders

- **Lupus — a chronic inflammatory disease that targets your joints, skin, kidneys, blood cells, heart and lungs**
- **Rheumatoid arthritis — a chronic inflammatory disease targeting the tissue that lines your joints (synovium)**

Cancers

- **Lymphoma — cancer that originates in your lymphatic system**
- **Leukemia — cancer of your body's blood-forming tissue, including your bone marrow and lymphatic system**
- **Other cancers that have spread (metastasized) to lymph nodes**

Other possible but rare causes include certain medications, such as the anti-seizure medication phenytoin (Dilantin) and preventive medications for malaria.

Complications

If infection is the cause of your swollen lymph nodes and isn't treated, an abscess may form. Abscesses are localized collections of pus caused by infections. Pus contains fluid,

white blood cells, dead tissue, and bacteria or other invaders. An abscess may require drainage and antibiotic treatment.

Treatment

Swollen lymph nodes caused by a virus usually return to normal after the viral infection resolves. Antibiotics are not useful to treat viral infections. Treatment for swollen lymph nodes from other causes depends on the cause:

- Infection. The most common treatment for swollen lymph nodes caused by a bacterial infection is antibiotics. If your swollen lymph nodes are due to an HIV infection, you'll receive specific treatment for that condition.**
- Immune disorder. If your swollen lymph nodes are a result of certain conditions, such as lupus or rheumatoid arthritis, treatment is directed at the underlying condition.**
- Cancer. Swollen nodes caused by cancer require treatment for the cancer. Depending on the type of cancer, treatment may involve surgery, radiation or chemotherapy.**

Lifestyle and home remedies

If your swollen lymph nodes are tender or painful, you might get some relief by doing the following:

- **Apply a warm compress.** Apply a warm, wet compress, such as a washcloth dipped in hot water and wrung out, to the affected area.
- **Take an over-the-counter pain reliever.** These include aspirin, ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, others), naproxen (Aleve) or acetaminophen (Tylenol, others). Use caution when giving aspirin to children or teenagers. Though aspirin is approved for use in children older than age 2, children and teenagers recovering from chickenpox or flu-like symptoms should never take aspirin. Talk to your doctor if you have concerns.
- **Get adequate rest.** You often need rest to aid your recovery from the underlying condition.

Preparing for your appointment

If you have swollen lymph nodes, you're likely to start by first seeing your family doctor. When you call to set up your appointment, you may be urged to seek immediate medical care if you're experiencing severe symptoms such as difficulty breathing or swallowing.

Here's some information to help you get ready for your appointment.

What you can do

- **Be aware of any pre-appointment restrictions. At the time you make the appointment, ask if you need to do anything in advance.**
- **List any symptoms you've been experiencing, and for how long. Among other symptoms, your doctor will want to know if you've had flu-like symptoms, such as a fever or sore throat, and may ask whether you've noticed changes in your weight. Include on your list every symptom, from mild to severe, that you've noticed since your lymph nodes began to swell.**
- **Make a list of all recent exposures to possible sources of infection. These may include travel abroad, hiking in areas known to have ticks, eating undercooked meat, being scratched by a cat, or engaging in high-risk sexual behavior or sex with a new partner.**
- **Make a list of your key medical information, including other conditions you're being treated for and the names of the medications that you're taking. Include every prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) drug you use, as well as any vitamins and supplements.**