

Swollen glands

Swollen glands are a sign your body is fighting an infection. They usually get better by themselves within 2 weeks.

Symptoms of swollen glands

Swollen glands feel like tender, painful lumps:

- on each side of the neck
- under the chin
- in the armpits
- around the groin

Glands (known as lymph glands or lymph nodes) swell near an infection to help your body fight it.

Sometimes a gland on only 1 side of the body swells.

You might also have other symptoms, such as a:

- [sore throat](#)
- [cough](#)
- [high temperature](#)

Causes of swollen glands

The cause of swollen glands is often common illnesses, for example:

- [colds](#)
- [tonsillitis](#)
- [ear infections](#)
- throat infections

Sometimes viral infections can cause swollen glands, such as [glandular fever](#).

The cause of swollen glands is rarely more serious conditions such as cancer of the blood system (leukaemia) or lymph system (lymphoma).

Treating swollen glands

Swollen glands should go down within 2 weeks.

You can help to ease the symptoms by:

- resting
- drinking plenty of fluids (to avoid [dehydration](#))
- taking painkillers like paracetamol or ibuprofen

⚠ Important

Do not give aspirin to children under 16

Do not self-diagnose, contact your GP if you're worried.

When to contact your GP

Talk to your GP if:

- you have swollen glands and you find it very difficult to swallow
- your swollen glands are getting bigger or they have not gone down within 2 weeks
- your glands feel hard or do not move when you press them
- you're having night sweats or have a very high temperature of 38 degrees Celsius or above for more than 3 or 4 days
- you have swollen glands and no other signs of illness or infection
- you have swollen lymph glands just above or below your collar bone (the bone that runs from your breastbone to each of your shoulders)

Your GP will recommend treatment depending on the cause of your swollen glands. This may include [antibiotics](#).

Antibiotics do not work if the cause of your swollen glands is a viral infection.

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