

Lymphadenopathy (swollen glands) in Children

Information for patients, relatives and carers

Swollen glands

Swollen glands (also called swollen lymph nodes) are very common in children and are usually a normal response to childhood infections such as colds or tonsillitis. They are also seen in children with eczema, dental problems and/ or babies with cradle cap.

Lymph node swelling or fever may indicate bacterial infection of the lymph node (bacterial lymphadenitis) requiring antibiotics. Very rarely, swollen glands may be a sign of less common infections or cancer.

Lymphadenopathy refers to lymph nodes that are abnormal in size (i.e., too big), consistency (the way that they feel) or number. Neck (cervical) lymph nodes are the most likely to be affected. Lymph nodes less than two centimetres in diameter are unlikely to indicate anything serious.

Small lymph nodes that are less than two centimetres, particularly in the neck, that persist and/or change in size (sometimes smaller, sometimes bigger) are rarely of any concern and do not usually require investigation.

Small nodes in the neck, that can be moved under the skin, can persist indefinitely and be simply normal nodes.

Lymph nodes that continue to measure greater than two centimetres for longer than six weeks need further investigation by a specialist, but it is important to remember that most of these lymph nodes are likely to turn out to be normal.

When should I worry?

We would like you to get in touch with us on the numbers below if you notice any of the following:

- Persistently big lymph nodes, more than two centimetres, for more than six weeks
- Night sweats (where your child's bedding is soaked through in the morning meaning that you are required to change the sheets), any weight loss or new itchiness of the skin that lasts for a few days
- Unexplained bruising
- Pain in your child's legs (especially that wakes them at night)
- A Lymph node that is getting much bigger quickly
- Widespread distribution (enlarged lymph nodes in lots of different areas around the body)

- Failure to respond to antibiotics, if prescribed:
 - If your child's fever is not improving after two days and/or
 - The node not decreasing in size after five days

If you have been seen in the paediatric clinic for enlarged node/s, and the problem is not responding to treatment or is getting worse and/or any new worrying symptoms have developed, please contact the relevant consultant's secretary to arrange another review.

If your child was seen on the children's ward, please call:

Ward 18, York: 01904 726018

Rainbow Ward, Scarborough: 01723 342336

Scan the QR code to view an online copy of this leaflet:



Tell us what you think of this leaflet

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact: Dr Rebecca Proudfoot, Consultant Paediatrician, Child Health, York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE, telephone 01904 721435 or email Secretary, terry.winter1@nhs.net.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net

An answer phone is available out of hours.

Teaching, training and research

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

If you would like this information in a different format, including braille or easy read, or translated into a different language, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department providing your care.

Patient Information Leaflets can be accessed via the Trust's Patient Information Leaflet website: www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/

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