

DESCRIPTION

The lymph nodes are structures throughout the body (composed largely of white blood cells), that act as small filters to help clear the body of infection or foreign substances. Lymphadenitis occurs when the glands swell and become enlarged or inflamed. This swelling is typically the response to a bacterial or viral infection.

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms can range from a large rubbery, non-tender node to a node that is swollen, red and hot to the touch. Swollen lymph nodes are most commonly found on the neck, groin or under the arm and typically occur near the site of infection.

For example: someone with lymphadenitis of the neck is often also suffering from strep throat; someone with an injury from a cat bite may have swollen nodes near the bite.

CAUSES

- Typically the response to a virus or common bacteria such as a strep or staph infection.
- Rarely, lymph nodes are enlarged by less common organisms such as TB, Bartonella (cat scratch disease), fungi or even cancers such as Hodgkins Lymphoma.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

In most common cases, a full recovery is expected although it may take weeks, or even months for the swelling to completely subside. Complications include: cellulitis, abscess or spread of infection.

TREATMENT MEASURES

- Apply cool compresses to the swollen node.
- Antibiotics may be prescribed for bacterial infection but will not be effective for a viral infection.
- It is very important that you follow-up with your primary care physician in 3-4 weeks to recheck the node. They may determine that further work up or testing is needed.
- Oral steroids may also be prescribed to reduce inflammation.
 - You should begin your steroid prescription today.
 - You should begin your steroid prescription tomorrow.

Your doctor also recommends the following over-the-counter medications. These medications may offer significant symptom relief:

- For fever or pain use acetaminophen or ibuprofen.
(Acetaminophen and ibuprofen may also be alternated every 3 hours for persistent fever or pain.)

- Unless your doctor tells you differently, always finish the full course of your antibiotic and/or steroid prescription, even if you start to feel better.
- Antibiotics and steroids may interfere with the effectiveness of birth control pills. Use an alternative method of contraception for the remainder of the month after finishing your antibiotic and/or steroid prescription.

SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION IF

- You develop a fever,
- You develop red streaking around the node,
- Vomiting,
- New symptoms appear,
- Symptoms worsen or do not improve despite treatment.