

Lymph Node Infection - Viral

Definition

- A viral infection of lymph nodes
- Main symptom is swollen nodes

Health Information

Symptoms

- Increased size of lymph nodes, usually in the neck
- Swollen nodes with a viral infection are usually ½ to 1 inch (12 -25 mm) across.
- Usually several nodes on both sides of the neck are swollen.
- Normal nodes are usually less than ½ inch (12 mm) across. This is the size of a pea or baked bean. They also feel soft and are easy to move.
- Symptoms of a cold or sore throat are also usually present.

Causes

- Viral infections in the nose, sinuses, mouth and throat cause the nodes to react.
- Most respiratory infections drain to the nodes in the neck.

Common Objects Used to Guess the Size

- Pea or pencil eraser- 1/4 inch or 6 mm
- Dime- 3/4 inch or 18 mm
- Quarter- 1 inch or 2.4 cm
- Golf ball- 1 1/2 inches or 3.6 cm
- Tennis Ball- 2 1/2 inches or 6 cm

Care Advice

1. Overview:

- Viral throat infections and colds can cause neck lymph nodes to get bigger. They may double in size. They may also become a little tender.
- This reaction is normal. It means the lymph nodes are fighting the infection and doing a good job.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

2. Pain Medicine:

- To help with the pain, give acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) or ibuprofen. Use as needed.

3. Fever:

- For fevers above 102° F (39° C), give acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) or ibuprofen. Note: Lower fevers are important for fighting infections.
- For ALL fevers: Keep your child well hydrated. Give lots of cold fluids.

4. Antibiotics Not Needed:

- Only bacterial infections are helped by antibiotics.
- Antibiotics will not kill viruses.

5. **Avoid Squeezing:**

- Don't squeeze lymph nodes.
- Reason: This may slow down the return to normal size.

6. **What to Expect:**

- After the infection is gone, the nodes will slowly return to normal size.
- This may take 2 to 4 weeks.
- However, they won't ever completely go away.

7. **Return to School:**

- Your child can go back to school after the fever is gone.
- Your child should also feel well enough to join in normal activities.
- Infected lymph nodes alone cannot be spread to others.

Call Your Doctor If

- Node becomes 1 inch (2.5 cm) or larger in size
- Swollen nodes last more than 1 month
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child becomes worse

Pediatric Care Advice

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