

HOW TO CHECK YOUR LYMPH NODES



 Belfast Health and Social Care Trust  Northern Health and Social Care Trust  South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

 Southern Health and Social Care Trust  Western Health and Social Care Trust

This information leaflet will be given to you by your CNS or Consultant when you are being discharged from your hospital haematology team. Copies are available via the NICaN Website:

www.nican.hscni.net

Introduction

This information leaflet will help you understand how to check your lymph nodes yourself following discharge from your haematology team. It explains what lymph nodes are, why and how you should check them and how often you should perform a check. Further information is provided at the end of the leaflet if you have any concerns or require any further advice.

The Lymphatic System

This system consists of lymphatic vessels and tissue which drains lymph fluid (a pale-white fluid which provides nutrients and removes waste from cells) which helps protect you from infection and disease. Lymph nodes are small oval lumps of lymphatic tissue found at certain parts of the body.

Lymph nodes can only be felt in the areas shown in the diagram below.



- Right lymphatic Duct
- Bloodstream
- Axillary (Armpit)
- Inguinal (Groin)
- Lymph (Head & neck)
- Back of the knees

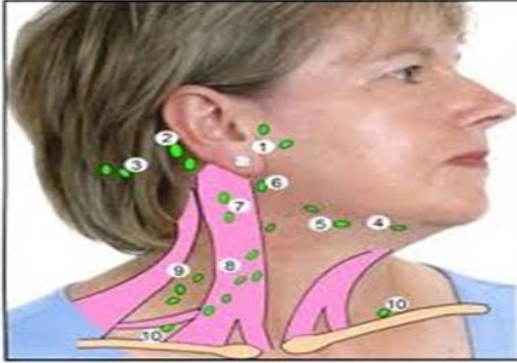
Usually lymph nodes are not enlarged and thus not able to be felt, but if you have previously had an infection (such as tonsillitis) you may have noticed and felt a lymph node becoming enlarged, painful and tender. Lymph nodes can also become enlarged due to cancer cells lodging in them.

How often should I check my lymph nodes?

You should check your lymph nodes approximately every 3 months. Checking them more often may result in difficulty noticing any change. Do not panic if you feel a lymph node, as it may be due to an infection but if it has not gone within two weeks contact your GP or clinical nurse specialist.

Your doctor or nurse will show you which lymph nodes to check and how to check them

How to check lymph nodes in the head and neck



Examine in the order shown starting at number 1.

With your fingertips and a gentle circular motion feel the lymph nodes illustrated.



Start with the nodes in front of the ear (1) then follow in order finishing just above the collar bone (10). Always check your nodes in this order, checking both sides for comparison

If you have an enlarged lymph node it may feel like a swelling the size of a pea, sometimes they can be larger.



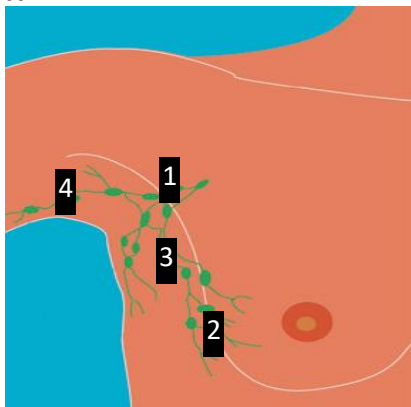
When feeling for the nodes in the neck (marked 8), tilt your head towards the side you are examining, this helps to relax the muscle. Now press the fingers under the muscle.



When checking the lymph nodes above the collar bone, hunch your shoulders and bring your elbows forward to relax the skin

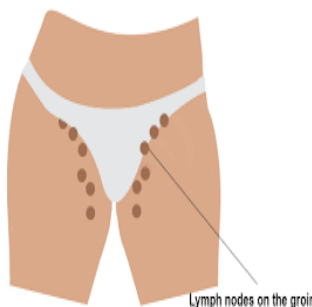
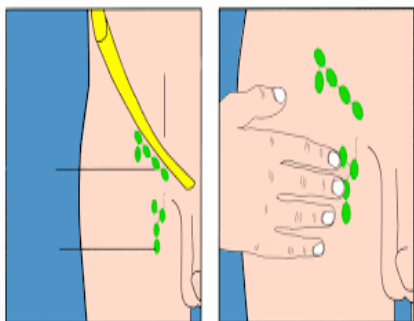
How to check lymph nodes in the arm pit

Remove top clothing down to the waist to get easy access to the armpits and sit in a comfortable position checking each armpit in turn.



To check the left side lift your arm slightly then place the fingers of your right hand high into the armpit and then lower your arm. 1. Feel in the central area of the armpit. Now move your fingers firmly against the chest wall as follows: 2. Along the front border of the armpit 3. Along the back border of the armpit 4. Feel along the inner border of the arm. Now check the other armpit.

How to check lymph nodes in the groin



There are two areas to look for inguinal (groin) nodes: **1.** Feel the horizontal chain of nodes in the right groin just below the ligament **2.** Feel the vertical chain along the upper thigh. **3.** Check the lymph nodes in the other groin.

Conclusion

If you have any concerns or feel you have detected enlarged lymph nodes please contact your Haematology Nurse Specialist.

PLEASE PLACE CONTACT DETAILS HERE