

Treatments available

If treatment is needed this can usually be done with an antibiotic that is taken by mouth as a syrup or tablet. If the swelling is very big the decision might be to give the antibiotics into the veins instead.

Side effects of treatment

Antibiotics may cause diarrhoea. You should also look out for any signs of drug allergy including a rash, lip or tongue swelling or difficulty breathing. This information will be on the patient information leaflet with your antibiotics.

What are the next steps?

If you need antibiotics a review will be arranged – either back at the Accident and Emergency department or with your GP.

If you are worried that the swelling is getting worse – bigger, red, hot or more painful you should not wait for this appointment but go back to the Emergency Department immediately.

What can I do?

Give your child regular Paracetamol and Ibuprofen for pain.

Monitor the swelling to look for worsening signs as above.

Lymphadenopathy / Lymphadenitis

Information for Parents and Carers

Royal Hospital for Children and Young people

What is Lymphadenopathy / Lymphadenitis?

Reactive lymphadenopathy means swollen glands.

It is a term used for lymph glands that become swollen during an infection, usually the common cold virus, tonsillitis or something in the nearby area such as teeth or skin infections.

Swollen glands commonly occur in children as they develop their immunity to different germs, most commonly viral infections affecting their ears and throat. The average child in the UK can have 6-8 viral infections in a single winter so lymph glands in the neck and throat can be enlarged for a long time and may never completely disappear.

This is a sign that the lymph nodes are doing their job and this does not require any treatment.

Lymphadenitis means the gland has an infection inside it.

Rather than the gland helping to fight a nearby infection, an infection has started inside the gland itself. The gland will become much more swollen and painful.

The rest of this leaflet will discuss the treatment of lymphadenitis.

What causes Lymphadenitis?

Infections inside the glands can be caused by both viruses and bacteria. It is unclear exactly why this happens.

Signs and Symptoms

If there is an infection inside the gland there will be a large swelling under the chin or in the neck that can appear very quickly and will usually be painful.

If your child has big glands and any of the following symptoms you should take them to your GP: -

- Your child is losing weight, seems unwell or having drenching night sweats
- The swollen glands are getting bigger
- The swollen gland is red or hot
- You feel swollen glands in other places such as under the arms or at the top of the chest
- The swollen glands are bigger than 2cms and have been there for more than 6 weeks.

Diagnosis

In most occasions the diagnosis can be made by examining the swollen glands and then doing a full examination of the rest of the body looking for signs of swollen glands in other places. Occasionally blood tests or an ultrasound scan of the swelling might be advised