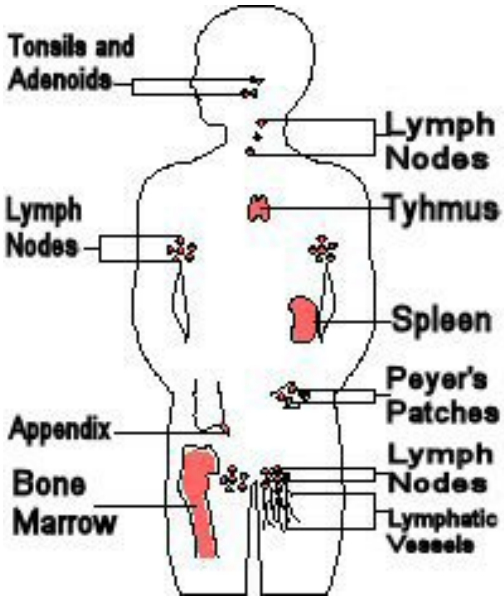
Lymphangitis, Pediatric

Lymphangitis is an infection of a lymph vessel. The lymphatic system is part of the body's immune system. It is a network of vessels, glands and organs that transport fluids and other substances around the body. Lymph vessels connect the lymph nodes (also called 'lymph glands'). These nodes filter bacteria and waste products from lymph. Lymphangitis is inflammation of these channels and is a common result of an infected wound or scrape to the skin.



CAUSES

Lymphangitis is usually due to a bacterial infection of the skin. The bacteria (*germ*) can enter your child's body through a cut, scratch, insect bite, surgical wound, or other skin injury. Lymphangitis is commonly caused by either Streptococcus or Staphylococcus. MRSA (Methicillin Resistant Staph Aureus) is a common cause of wound infections. It is important to tell your caregiver if your child has come in contact with someone who has been diagnosed with this infection or has frequent pimples, pustules, abscesses or boils as it might influence their choice of medications for treatment. Other bacteria can also cause this infection.

SYMPTOMS

- Red streak(s) on the skin.
- Skin pain/tenderness.
- Skin swelling.
- Skin warmth.
- Blistering of the affected skin.

There may also be:

- Fever.
- Swollen lymph glands.
- Chills.
- Headache.
- Overall ill feeling.

DIAGNOSIS

The diagnosis of lymphangitis is made by a physical exam. Blood tests may be done. If there is an infected wound, a culture may be taken to check for the type of germ that caused the infection. If a joint is involved and is red or swollen, x-rays and/or consultation with a bone specialist may be necessary.

TREATMENT

Lymphangitis is treated with medicine that kills germs (*antibiotics*). These can be given by mouth or by injection or both. In severe cases, the child will be put in the hospital for treatment. Children under the age of 3 years are more likely to require treatment in the hospital. Children with diabetes, low immune systems, those currently with chicken pox or on chronic steroids may have more severe infections. Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, and or fever, as directed by your caregiver. If there is a pocket of pus under the skin (abscess), minor surgery to drain it may be done.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Give your child plenty of liquids to drink.
- Have your child rest

- If possible, keep the infected area raised.
- Apply warm compresses to the infected area.
- Make sure your child takes all the prescribed antibiotics. Keep your child home from school until your caregiver suggests it.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Your child does not improve after 1 to 2 days of treatment.
- Red streaking is worse despite treatment.
- Your child refuses to drink.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

Your child shows any of these symptoms:

- Vomiting and not being able to keep medicines or liquids down.
- Signs of dehydration:
  - Unusual fussiness, weakness or fatigue
  - Not urinating at least once in every 8 hours
  - No tears when crying
  - Dry mouth.
- Temperature is over 100.4° F (38°C) after 48 hours of treatment.
- There is severe pain, redness and/or swelling around a lymph gland.
- Hard time waking up.
- Unusual fussiness. Not calming down with pain medicines or holding.
- Severe headache or stiff neck.
- Redness spreading to the skin around the red streak.

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