Lymph Nodes, Swollen Glands

The *lymphatic system* filters fluid from around cells. It is like a system of blood vessels. These channels carry lymph instead of blood. The lymphatic system is an important part of the *immune* (disease fighting) system. When people talk about “swollen glands in the neck,” they are usually talking about swollen lymph nodes. The lymph nodes are like the little traps for infection. You and your caregiver may be able to feel lymph nodes, especially swollen nodes, in these common areas: the groin (*inguinal* area), armpits (*axilla*), and above the clavicle (*supraclavicular*). You may also feel them in the neck (*cervical*) and the back of the head just above the hairline (*occipital*).

Swollen glands occur when there is any condition in which the body responds with an allergic type of reaction. For instance, the glands in the neck can become swollen from insect bites or any type of minor infection on the head. These are very noticeable in children with only minor problems. Lymph nodes may also become swollen when there is a tumor or problem with the lymphatic system, such as Hodgkin's disease.

TREATMENT

- Most swollen glands do not require treatment. They can be observed (watched) for a short period of time, if your caregiver feels it is necessary. Most of the time, observation is not necessary.
- *Antibiotics* (medicines that kill germs) may be prescribed by your caregiver. Your caregiver may prescribe these if he or she feels the swollen glands are due to a *bacterial* (germ) infection. Antibiotics are not used if the swollen glands are caused by a virus.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Take medications as directed by your caregiver. Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- If you begin to run a temperature greater than 102° F (38.9° C), or as your caregiver suggests.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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