

Lymph Nodes, Enlarged

What are lymph nodes?

Lymph nodes are part of the lymph system. The lymph system helps the body fight infection. It includes the lymph nodes, lymph vessels, and other parts of the body's immune and blood-forming systems, such as the spleen and bone marrow.

The lymph nodes are small (less than 1 inch across), oval-shaped organs in the neck, armpits, groin, and elsewhere throughout the body. Lymph nodes make and store infection-fighting white blood cells called lymphocytes and monocytes. These blood cells are carried in the lymph fluid. The lymph nodes also filter the lymph fluid, keeping bacteria and other organisms out of the bloodstream. The nodes may also trap cancer cells. The lymph vessels link all the nodes in the body and carry the lymph fluid to other parts of the body.

Lymph nodes are also called lymph glands even though they are not really glands.

What causes enlarged lymph nodes?

The nodes get bigger when they fight germs or cancer. For example, they may become enlarged because of:

- Infection in the part of the body near the swollen nodes, such as infected sores and wounds
- Infections such as colds, flu, sore throat, strep throat, ear infections, mononucleosis, and tuberculosis
- Diseases such as Hodgkin's disease and other types of cancer

Once the lymph nodes become enlarged, they often do not completely go back to their original size. It is not unusual, for example, to feel enlarged lymph nodes in the groin because of a previous injury to the legs, such as a stubbed toe or skinned knee.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of enlarged lymph nodes may include:

- One or more swollen lumps
- Tenderness when the glands are touched
- Nodes that are hard and not movable

How are they treated?

Lymph nodes that are swollen for more than a couple of weeks should be checked by your healthcare provider. Treatment is not always necessary, but when it is, the treatment depends on why the nodes are enlarged.

When should I call my healthcare provider?

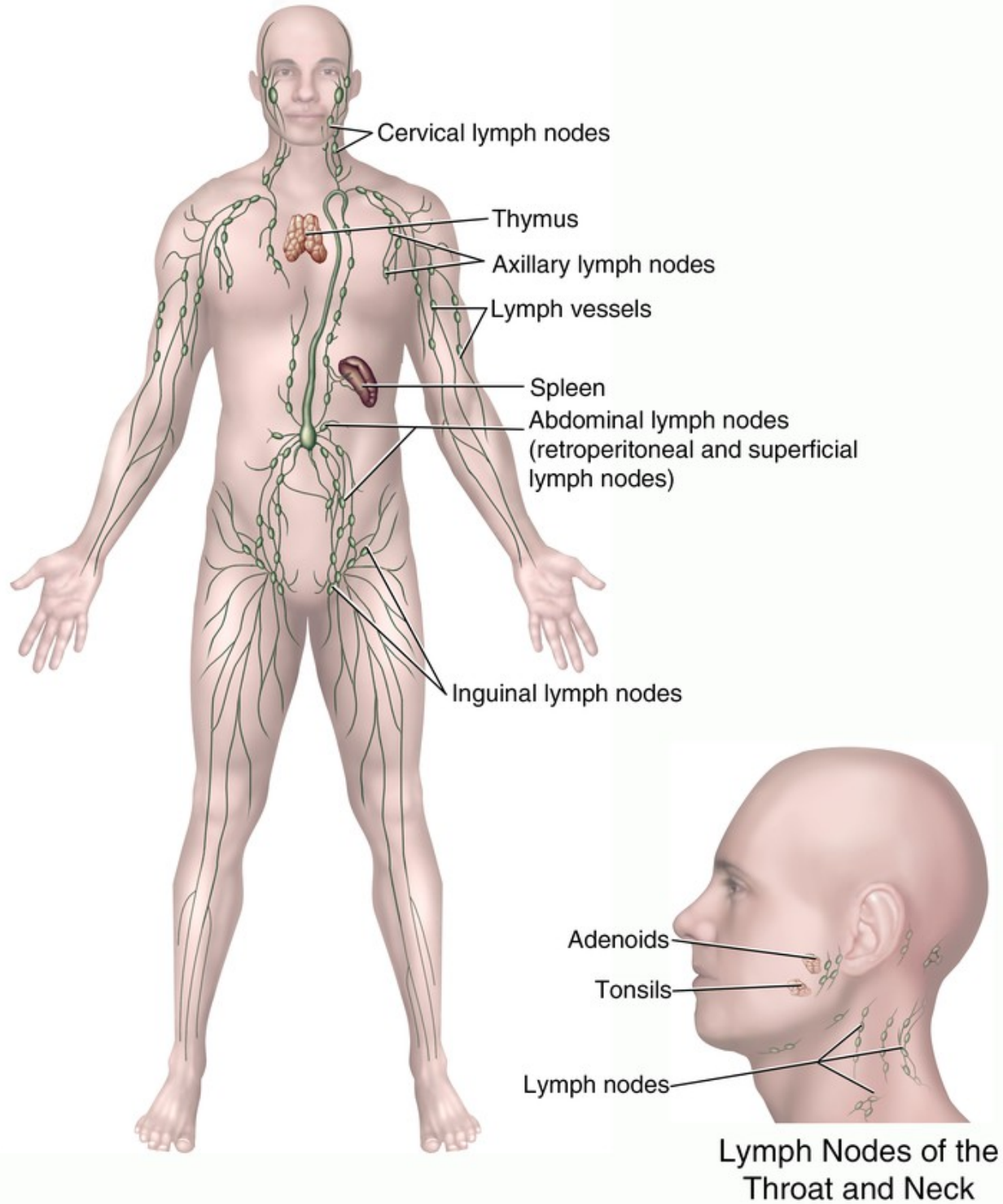
Call your provider if swollen lymph nodes:

- Become more painful or swollen
- Cause problems with breathing or swallowing
- Last longer than 14 days
- Feel hard when you touch them

Developed by RelayHealth.

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Lymph Nodes and Vessels



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