NHS
West Hertfordshire Teaching Hospitals
NHS Trust



A guide to...

Cervical Lymphadenitis

Patient Information

Children's Emergency Department (CED)

Watford General Hospital



What is cervical lymphadenitis?

Lymph nodes are a vital part of our immune system and react in response to *any* infection detected. In children, being able to feel the lymph nodes in their neck is very common, and present in around half of all well children at any one time.

Occasionally, your child may develop a significantly larger lymph node — this can be **acute** and related to an infection, or chronic and related to other causes.

In this instance, the clinician has assessed your child and diagnosed an **acute cervical lymphadenitis**. They feel that your child is well enough to continue treatment under your supervision at home.

What causes cervical lymphadenitis?

An infection can develop within this otherwise sterile area, causing the swelling, pain and other associated symptoms.

Signs and Symptoms

- A visibly large swelling on one side of their neck
- Possible overlying redness
- Painful to touch
- Reduced ability to rotate their head due to pain
- High temperature.

Investigations and Treatment

In **acute lymphadenitis**, your child may not require any specific investigations initially. They will be sent home with oral antibiotics.

If there is no improvement or they become more unwell, then they will require blood tests and admission for intravenous (IV) antibiotics . They may also require imaging of the swelling to be performed (usually by ultra sound) and referral to the Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT) specialty team.

RED FLAG SIGNS

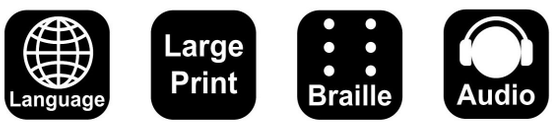
Seek urgent review if your child:

- becomes more unwell
- Has swelling that continues to get worse after antibiotic therapy has been ongoing for more than 24 hours.
- develops laboured or noisy breathing
- is vomiting
- is not tolerating their oral antibiotics
- develops headaches or confusion.

What if I am worried about my child?

- Contact GP or local pharmacy
- https://hwehealthiertogether.nhs.uk/
- You can use the NHS 111 service for advice and out-of-hours support
- Call 999 in a life-threatening emergency

If you need this leaflet in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01923 217 187** or email **westherts.pals@nhs.uk**



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