

Swollen Glands

Lymph nodes are small glands found throughout the body—most noticeably in the neck, armpit, and groin areas. Lymph nodes act as filters, trapping and fighting germs and infection. Interestingly, the lymph nodes swell somewhat when the body is fighting minor infections, such as colds and small cuts. They can swell greatly, indeed, and become very firm and tender if the infection is more serious. Typically, the glands near the affected area become swollen. For example, the neck glands swell when reacting to tonsillitis, while the groin glands swell when reacting to a leg or genital infection. Once they harden, the lymph nodes may remain hard long after the initial infection has cleared up. You needn't be concerned, therefore, about small, hardened glands that follow a child's cold or minor infection.

Although swollen glands rarely need to be treated for the swelling itself, the underlying infection that is causing the swelling may need to be treated. For example, strep throat requires treatment with antibiotics. Consequently, you should call your doctor or other health care professional if any of the following four situations occur:

- 1 if the glands are large, firm, very tender, or if the overlying skin is reddened;
- 2 if you have enlarged glands along with signs of an infected cut or sore, including fever of over 100 degrees, swelling and tenderness, discharge from the cut, or red streaks extending from the area;
- 3 if swollen glands continue to get bigger, become swollen without any apparent cause, or last longer than two weeks;
- 4 if enlarged glands appear in areas other than the neck, armpit, or groin.



Use these Kaiser Permanente resources for reliable health information:

- ❖ Connect to our Web site at members.kp.org to access health and drug encyclopedias, interactive programs, message boards, health classes, and much more.
- ❖ Check your *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook*.
- ❖ Contact your Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department for health information, programs, or other resources.
- ❖ With a *Kaiser Permanente Healthphone Directory*, you can pick topics and messages to hear on Kaiser Permanente Healthphone (1-800-332-7563; TTY: 1-800-777-9059). Request a *Directory* from your Health Center or Department or download a copy at members.kp.org. (Search "Healthphone".)

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor.