

'The content provided in this leaflet is compliant with the cancer standards and keyworker documentation. All leaflets are updated whenever necessary or on the review date shown below'

How can I help reduce healthcare associated infections?

Infection control is important to the well-being of our patients and for that reason we have infection control procedures in place. Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. We ask that you, and anyone visiting you, use the hand rub (special gel) available at the main entrance of the hospital and at the entrance to every ward before coming in to and after leaving the ward or hospital. In some situations hands may need to be washed at the sink using soap and water rather than using the hand rub. Staff will let you know if this is the case.

www.buckshealthcare.nhs.uk

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How to check your lymph nodes

This leaflet will explain why your lymph nodes need to be checked, and how you can check your own lymph nodes

Patient Information Leaflet

If you require a translation or an alternative format for this leaflet please ask for assistance.

Safe & compassionate care,

every time

Introduction

You have been diagnosed with a skin cancer that on occasions can spread into the lymphatic system. As part of your follow up your Doctor has recommended that your lymph nodes are examined.

The lymph nodes examined depend on the location of your skin cancer. For example, if your skin cancer is on your leg then the lymph nodes in your inguinal area (groin) will be examined, or if on your face then the nodes in your head and neck will be examined.

The aim of the examination is to detect any enlargement of the lymph nodes and undertake investigations at an early stage. Some people express a wish to check their own lymph nodes between clinic appointments – this leaflet will help you carry out these checks.

Your doctor or nurse will show you how and which lymph nodes to check, and we would hope that you will become more confident with your technique in time.

Further Information

Macmillan Cancer Support
0808 808 00 00
www.macmillan.org.uk

Cancer Research UK
(Supporter Services) 020 7121 6699
(Switchboard) 020 7242 0200
www.cancerresearchuk.org

British Association of Dermatologists
www.bad.org.uk

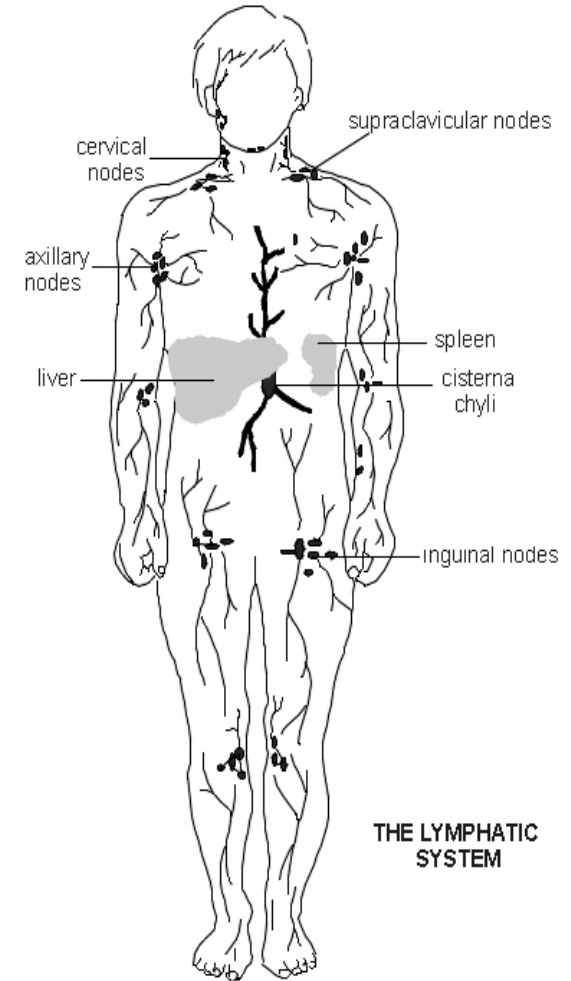
Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust
Cancer Education, Information and Support Service
01296 316954
www.buckshealthcare.nhs.uk

Free Prescriptions

All cancer patients undergoing treatment for cancer, the effects of cancer or the effects of cancer treatment can apply for an exemption certificate for a free prescription from their GP.

The lymphatic system

The lymphatic system is a network of vessels that carry a clear fluid called lymph around the body. This lymph fluid drains into lymph nodes that act as small filters, before the fluid empties into the blood stream.



What is a lymph node and what does it do?

Lymph nodes are small, round clumps of tissue that trap cancer cells, bacteria, or other harmful substances that may be in the lymph. Lymph nodes are commonly felt in the following areas:

- Head and neck
- Arms
- Axilla (armpits)
- Inguinal area (groin)
- Back of knees

Lymph nodes can sometimes become enlarged if they have filtered infection cells, inflammatory cells or cancer cells.

Checking your lymph nodes **once a month** is sufficient and this can be done at the same time as you check your skin for any changing moles. Checking them more often may result in difficulty noticing any change.

Do not panic if you feel a lymph node as it may well settle within a week. If this is not the case, contact your hospital doctor/GP or specialist nurse.

Conclusion

The purpose of this leaflet is to help you understand why we check your lymph nodes at your follow up appointments.

It explains which lymph nodes you need to check and how to undertake this procedure yourself. The aim is to make sure that if your skin cancer has spread to the lymph nodes (though this is unlikely), it is detected straightaway and reported to your GP or nurse rather than waiting until your next clinic appointment.

Useful telephone numbers

Your Consultant is: _____

Secretary to your Consultant: Tel: _____

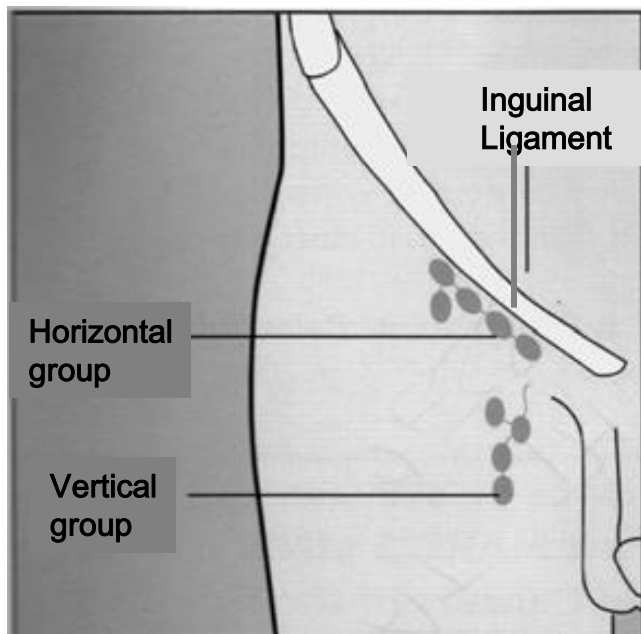
GP Tel: _____

Your Clinical Nurse Specialist is:

Lindsay Lane / Annett Ratcliff

Telephone: 01296 316079

How to check lymph nodes in the groin

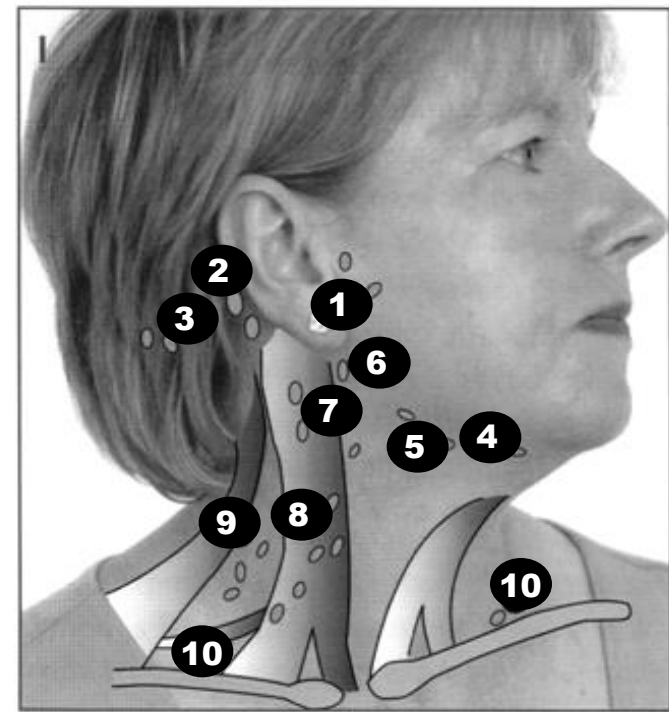


Remove all your clothing from the waist down and lie down in a comfortable position. Lift your right knee so it is bent towards the ceiling and then allow your right leg to flop out towards the bed/floor.

There are two areas to look for inguinal (groin) nodes:

- With your fingertips feel the horizontal chain of nodes in the right groin just below the ligament (see above diagram).
- Feel the vertical chain along the upper thigh (see above diagram).
- Now check the lymph nodes in the left groin.

How to check lymph nodes in the head and neck



- With your fingertips, in a gentle circular motion feel the lymph nodes shown in the diagram above.
- Start with the nodes in front of the ear (1) then follow in order, finishing just above the collar bone (10).
- Always check your nodes in this order.
- Check both sides for comparison. If you have an enlarged lymph node it may feel like a swelling the size of a pea, through sometimes they can be larger.

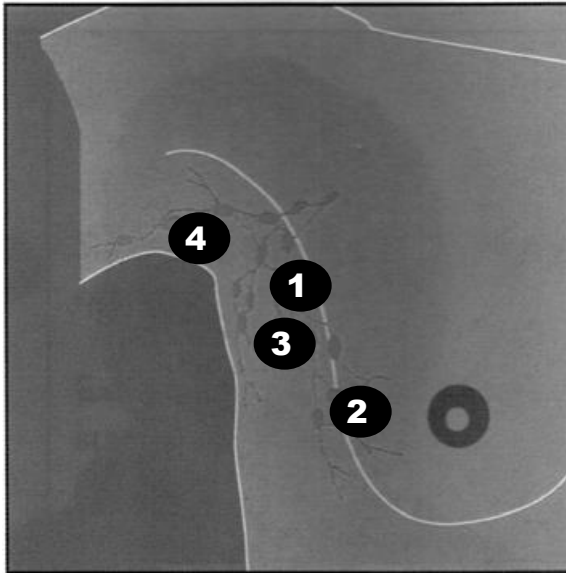
When feeling the nodes in your neck (marked **8**):

- Tilt your head towards the side you are examining – this helps to relax the muscle.
- Now press your fingers under the muscle.

When checking the lymph nodes above the collar bone:

- Hunch your shoulders and bring your elbows forward to relax the skin.
- Now feel above the collar bone (marked **10**).

How to check lymph nodes in the armpit



Remove all clothing down to the waist to get easy access to the armpits.

- Sit in a comfortable position.
- Check each armpit in turn.

To check the left side, lift your arm slightly then place the fingers of your right hand high into the armpit and then lower your arm.

- Feel in the central area of the armpit (**1**)

Now move your fingers firmly against the chest wall as follows:

- Along the front border of the armpit (**2**)
- Along the back border of the armpit (**3**)
- Feel along the inner border of the arm (**4**)

Now check the other armpit.