

Lymphadenopathy



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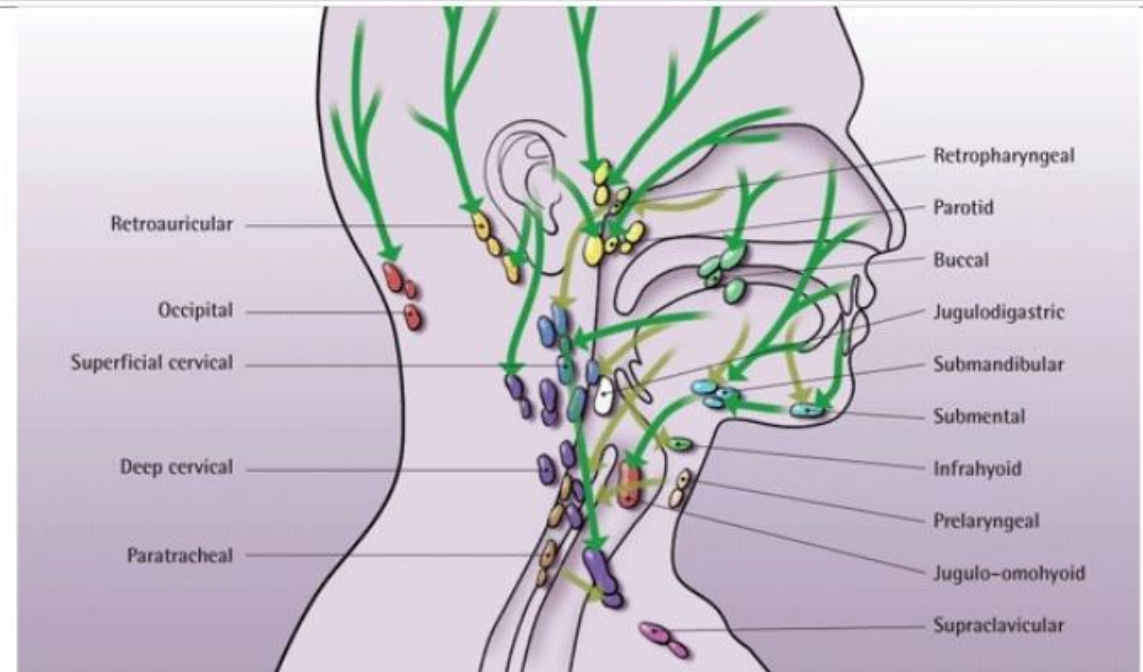
-Lymph nodes are present throughout the body, but particular collections are present in the head and neck region.

-**Lymphadenopathy** or **lymphadenitis** refers to lymph nodes that are abnormal in size, number or consistency.

-The term lymphadenopathy comes from the word lymph and a combination of the Greek words: *αδένας*, *adenas* ("gland") and *παθεία*, *patheia* ("act of suffering" or "disease").

Classification of nodes

in head and neck region



Etiology

I. Generalized Lymphadenopathy

- Enlargement of more than two non-contiguous lymph node groups
- Can be caused by viral, bacterial, fungal, autoimmune disorders, storage disease, or neoplastic disorders



II. Regional Lymphadenopathy

- Enlargement of the lymph nodes in one region of the body
- Can be cervical, occipital, preauricular or submaxillary and submental infection

Lymph node enlargement is seen as a sign of an infectious, autoimmune or malignant disorder

If lymph nodes are detected, these five characteristics should be noted and described:

-**Size**: Nodes are generally considered to be normal if they are up to 1 cm in diameter. Larger than 2 cm in diameter are prognostic of diseases or cancer.

-**Pain/Tenderness**: If a lymph node rapidly increases in size, its capsule stretches and causes pain which is usually the result of an inflammatory process. Pain may also result from hemorrhage into the necrotic center of a malignant node.

-**Consistency**: Stony-hard nodes are typically a sign of cancer, usually metastatic. Very firm, rubbery nodes suggest lymphoma. Softer nodes are the result of infections or inflammatory conditions.

-**Matting**: A group of nodes that feels connected and seems to move as a unit is said to be “matted.” Nodes that are matted can be either benign like tuberculosis or malignant.

-**Location**: The anatomic location of localized adenopathy will sometimes be helpful in narrowing the differential diagnosis.

Spread by lymphatics

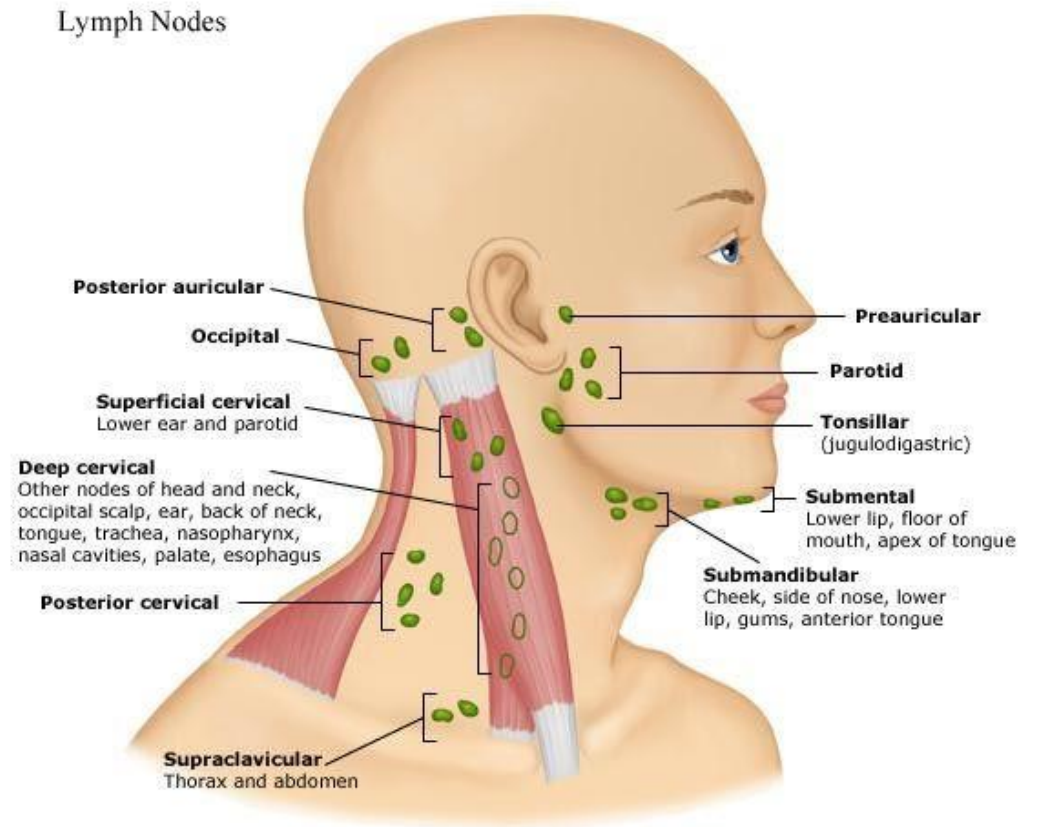
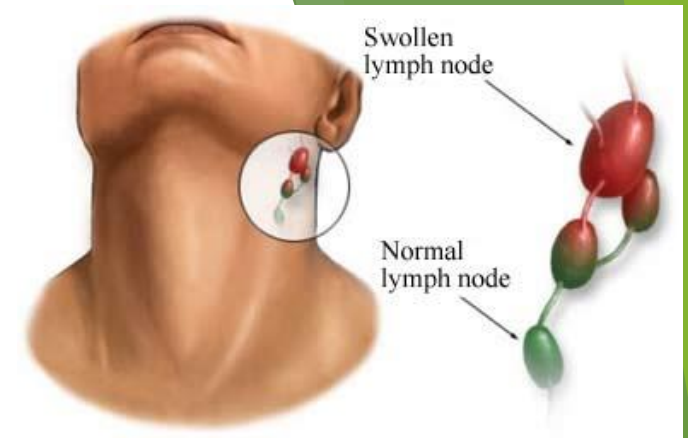
-The lymphatics of the head and neck can allow the spread of infection from the teeth and associated oral tissue.

-The route of dental infection traveling through the nodes varies according to the teeth involved.

-Submental nodes drain the mandibular incisors, primary nodes drain the maxillary third molars, and the submandibular drain all other teeth.

-Their enlargement is usually the result of:

- pharyngitis
- herpetic gingivostomatitis
- dental abscess



Role of Dental Team

- In a healthy patient lymph nodes are not easily seen or palpated.
- Lymphadenopathy enlarges the nodes so palpation is crucial for detection of abnormalities.
- Record any changes in consistency such as firm to bony hard.
- Concerns leading to severe lymphadenopathy may require a referral to the primary care physician.
- Emphasize the importance of an intra/extra oral screening for every six month checkup.
- Educate the patient about oral health during a period of bacterial or viral infection.

