

Mesenteric adenitis

“Adenitis” is inflammation or infection of lymph nodes or “glands” in the body. This is what causes painful lumps under the jaw or in the neck when a child has a sore throat or sore ear. Other lymph nodes which may swell in this way are under the arms and in the groin.

There are similar nodes inside the abdomen around the blood supply to your bowel - in what is called the 'mesentery'. When these nodes swell to fight a virus or other infection, they become painful. You can't see the swelling as the nodes are deep inside the abdomen. All the patient is aware of is tummy pain, sometimes on the lower right side of the abdomen, and feeling a bit unwell.

What causes it?

The cause is often unknown, but around 25% of people have an upper respiratory infection (cold). It can also be caused by bacterial infections such as *Yersinia*.

How is it diagnosed?

The diagnosis of mesenteric adenitis is really a 'diagnosis of exclusion' – in other words, there is no one test that can make this diagnosis. The doctors will rule out other causes of tummy pain first and if nothing else is found the diagnosis will then be made.

Mesenteric adenitis can have the same symptoms as appendicitis and often an ultrasound is done to look at both the appendix and the mesenteric nodes (glands). An ultrasound can rule out appendicitis but may not be able to diagnose mesenteric adenitis as the nodes are not always easy to see.

How is it treated?

Mesenteric adenitis usually settles by itself. Treatment is a matter of waiting for the pain to settle, giving pain relief (such as Panadol, Nurofen) in the meantime. Having your child rest in bed and drink plenty of fluids are the best things you can do to help your child recover.

How long will it last?

The pain does not usually last more than a few days. The appetite may be low while the nodes are swollen, but as long as the child is drinking fluids well this will not be a problem.

When should I be worried?

If your child has had an ultrasound, you can be reassured that this is the reason for your child's pain. However, if you child starts to vomit dark green bile, or the pain suddenly changes you should be seen again by a doctor. If your child refuses to drink and is not passing urine at least every 8 hours you should also see your doctor.

For more information

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