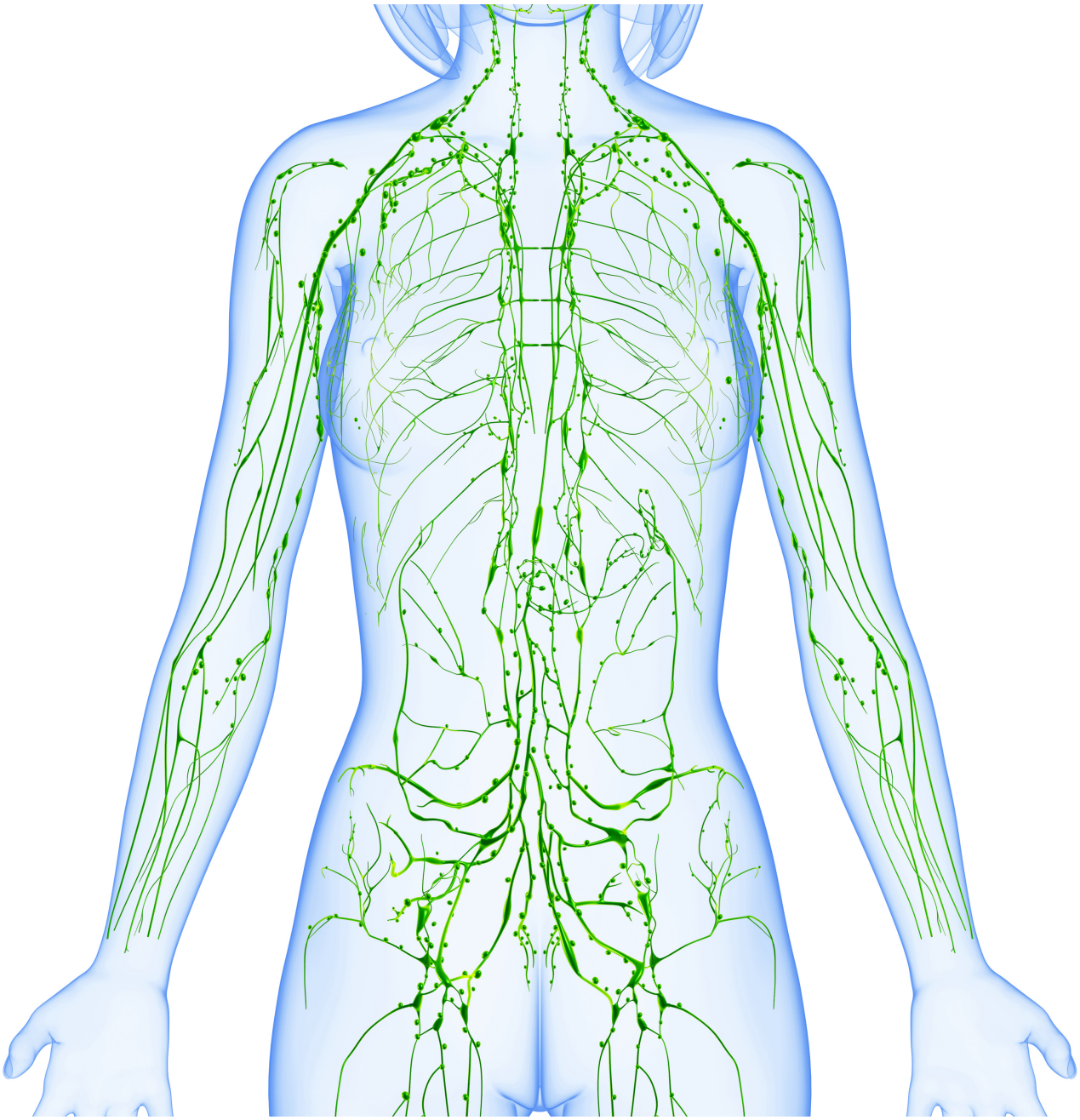
Understanding Lymph Nodes and Your Lymphatic System



By Diane McLauchlan

It's past time to try and put another conventional medicine myth to rest. That is the fear they try to instill in us about finding cancerous cells in our lymph nodes. As most of us have already learned, if you agree to a biopsy or, even worse, to a lumpectomy or mastectomy, the doctors always want to either biopsy a few lymph nodes or, in the case of surgeries, remove some sentinel lymph nodes from your body. Doctors claim they must do this to see whether or not the cancer is spreading. Doctors use the information of finding cancerous cells in the lymph nodes to scare the crap out of you and to justify further surgery, chemo, radiation and drugs!

First, let's think back to what we already know about cancer. Cancer is a systemic disease. That means we have circulating cancer cells throughout our body. Cancer does not come neatly wrapped up like a Christmas present in a tidy little package. Even people who never show any signs of having cancer may have cancerous cells circulating throughout their body. Why don't they end up with cancerous tumors? The answer is often because their lymph system, a vital part of our immune system, is doing its job.

Our lymphatic system is our body's clean up crew. It's job is to filter toxins and other unwanted materials. It also helps fight infections. This includes cleaning up and killing cancer cells. So, when cancerous cells are found in our lymph nodes, it

usually just means that our lymphatic system is doing its job! It does not necessarily mean, as doctors would have us believe, that the cancer is spreading.

"Cancer, in particular, is very interesting, in regards to the lymph system. Everyone has cancer cells. Some cells simply don't commit suicide as they should when they are damaged. Instead, something has to kill them. That "something" occurs in the lymph nodes. The cancerous cells get trapped in the lymph nodes, and when your lymph nodes are working properly, they will kill cancerous cells." If you remove those nodes, they can no longer do their job. http://www.tiofsw.com/healthy-lymph-system-healthy-life/

Lymph fluid, in the simplest terms, is actually part of our blood. It is primarily blood plasma and, while mostly separate from our blood circulation, it is still part of it. It leaves your capillaries, carrying oxygen, nutrients, and white blood cells to your tissue cells. Some of this lymph fluid is reabsorbed into the capillaries, but the rest drains into lymph vessels. Lymph fluid is carried through lymph vessels toward your heart through a series of lymph nodes. In those nodes, the fluid is filtered, and specialized white blood cells attack bacteria and kill cancer cells. The newly cleaned plasma is routed back into your blood near the heart. Being that intertwined with our heart and our blood supply, it also carries heat, just like blood. That explains why lymphatic congestion also shows up thermography scans. (Some of this was copied from the tiofsw link cited, above.)

We are often told that swollen lymph nodes are cause for great concern. That, too, is not necessarily so. In most cases, once again, our lymphatic system is simply doing its job. "When bacteria are recognized in the lymph fluid, the lymph nodes make more infection-fighting white blood cells, which can cause swelling. The swollen nodes can

sometimes be felt in the neck, underarms and groin, according to the NLM."

"The majority of enlarged lymph nodes are not dangerous; they are the body's way of fighting off an infection, such as a viral upper respiratory infection. If the lymph nodes become significantly enlarged and persist longer than the infection, then they are more worrisome. There is no specific size cutoff, but typically nodes that persist at larger than a centimeter are more worrisome ..." 1

Our lymphatic system consists of more than our lymph nodes. Did you know your spleen is part of your lymphatic system? "The spleen . . . acts as a blood filter; it controls the amount of red blood cells and blood storage in the body, and helps to fight infection," said Jordan Knowlton, an advanced registered nurse practitioner at the University of Florida Health Shands Hospital. If the spleen detects potentially dangerous bacteria, viruses, or other microorganisms in the blood, it — along with the lymph nodes — creates white blood cells called lymphocytes, which act as defenders against invaders. The lymphocytes produce antibodies to kill the foreign microorganisms and stop infections from spreading." 1

Most of us have heard about T cells, the cancer killing cells. We have these thanks in part to our thymus, which is also a part of our lymphatic system. "The thymus is located in the chest just above the heart, according to Merck Manual. This small organ stores immature lymphocytes (specialized white blood cells) and prepares them to become active T cells, which help destroy infected or cancerous cells." 1

When a person has had surgery and/or radiation to remove a cancer, it can result in swelling, known as lymphedema. "This most commonly occurs in women who have had surgery to remove a breast

cancer. Part of the operation to remove the breast cancer involves removing lymph nodes in the armpit. The more lymph nodes removed the higher the risk of chronic bothersome swelling and pain due to lymphedema in the arm, Hamrick explained." 1

"The primary function of the lymphatic system is to transport lymph, a fluid containing infection-fighting white blood cells, throughout the body. " 1 When doctors remove lymph nodes they have now interfered with and, in many cases, interrupted the natural flow of lymphatic fluid. This interruption can have permanent consequences adversely affecting our body's ability to fight infections and clean up toxins. This can also interfere with our body's ability to fight cancer. With surgical removal of lymph nodes, your lymph system is not working properly. When it doesn't work properly, your body keeps the toxins it shouldn't have, bacteria isn't killed off, and cancer cells may grow and spread. So, removing lymph nodes, even the sentinel nodes which doctors seem to think are disposable, can actually create a situation where you allow even more cancer to develop. Just the opposite of what doctors are claiming to be doing!

So, how do we keep our lymphatic system healthy?

One of the primary ways is to make sure you stay well-hydrated. Our lymph consists of approximately

95% water. Keeping well-hydrated is essential to keeping our lymphatic fluids in a more liquid state. Lack of water can reduce lymphatic fluids to a more gel-like state, interfering with its ability to flow.

Another important way to make sure you have a healthy lymphatic system is to keep moving. Unlike our heart, our lymphatic system does not have a pump. The only way it has of keeping things flowing is with our help. Fortunately, it does not take much to do this. Simple things such as dry-brushing, massage, exercises like rebounding and old-fashioned jumping jacks all can help. Even deep breathing can help keep your lymphatic fluids moving.

Our diet also plays an important part in the health of our lymphatic system. "The enzymes and acids in fruit are powerful lymph cleansers. " "Eat plenty of green vegetables to get adequate chlorophyll to help purify your blood and lymph." "Eat raw, unsalted nuts and seeds to power up your lymph with fatty acids." "Add a few lymph-boosting herbal teas to your day such as astragalus, echinacea, goldenseal or wild indigo root tea." 2 I've recently learned that the herb, cleavers, is also excellent for our lymphatic system.

For more information on cancer and our lymphatic system you may find this video of interest:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BR1oj2g0_nA&feature=share&app=desktop

1 https://www.livescience.com/26983-lymphatic-system.html
2 https://www.care2.com/greenliving/11-ways-to-boost-your-lymphatic-system-for-great-health.html