



The Lymphatic System

The lymphatic system is a fantastic circulation system in the body whose function can mean health or disease to each of us. There is twice as much lymph in the body as there is blood, and there is twice as many lymphatic vessels as there are blood vessels.

Our lymph system is basically our sewer system. As blood circulates through arteries, then through capillaries (where it exchanges nutrients and hormones for waste products), and then into veins, it leaks fluids. These fluids must be returned to the blood stream, but first they are filtered through lymph nodes.

When congested, they are swollen and tender. If you are unaware of what the lymph nodes are, you could easily become alarmed when you suddenly find a lump in one, but usually it is nothing more than a hardworking, efficient lymph node.

Although the lymph system has millions of vessels all over the body just like the blood system, there is one really big difference. It has no strong heart to keep it moving. The lymph is moved by breathing, walking, intestinal activity, and muscle action. As muscles tighten, lymph vessels are squeezed and lymph is pushed along and filtered through lymph nodes on its way back to the veins and the heart.

These filters trap anything harmful. Toxins and poisons from a cut finger can cause pain and swelling in the armpit, or an infected toe might cause the same type feeling in the groin area. One area where we almost always notice lymph nodes (some people refer to them as glands) is in the neck when you have a sore throat or sinus congestion.

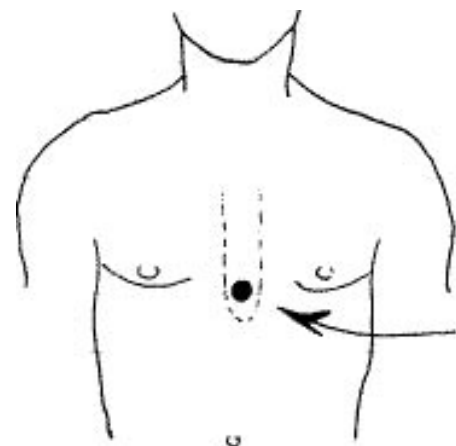
Anytime the lymph backs up you have problems! A clogged lymph system can mean: upper respiratory infections, sinus, ear infections, throat problems, colds, tonsillitis, as well as bronchitis and pneumonia.

Some other things that can be involved are recurrent low back ache, tennis elbow, sprained ankles and even having to go to the bathroom frequently at night.

It's obvious that we need to keep it moving and one way is through exercise ... remember when the muscles contract they squeeze the vessels and move the lymph through. There are other things we can do also, such as lying on a slant-board.

There is a reflex point that helps stimulate the lymphatic drainage in the upper part of the body. It is located at the bottom part of the breast bone or sternum. By vigorously rubbing this area for about two minutes, you can help the lymphatic drainage.

Also, through massage, the lymph node can be helped and drained by "gently rubbing or milking" it toward the heart. Working it away from the



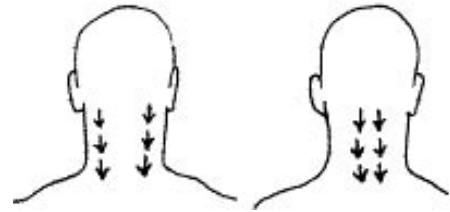


heart will only irritate it, so be sure you are working it toward the heart.

Lymphatic massage works quite well, for example, in sore throat and sinus congestions. You can start under the jaw and milk down the throat on each side of the big muscle on each side of the neck.

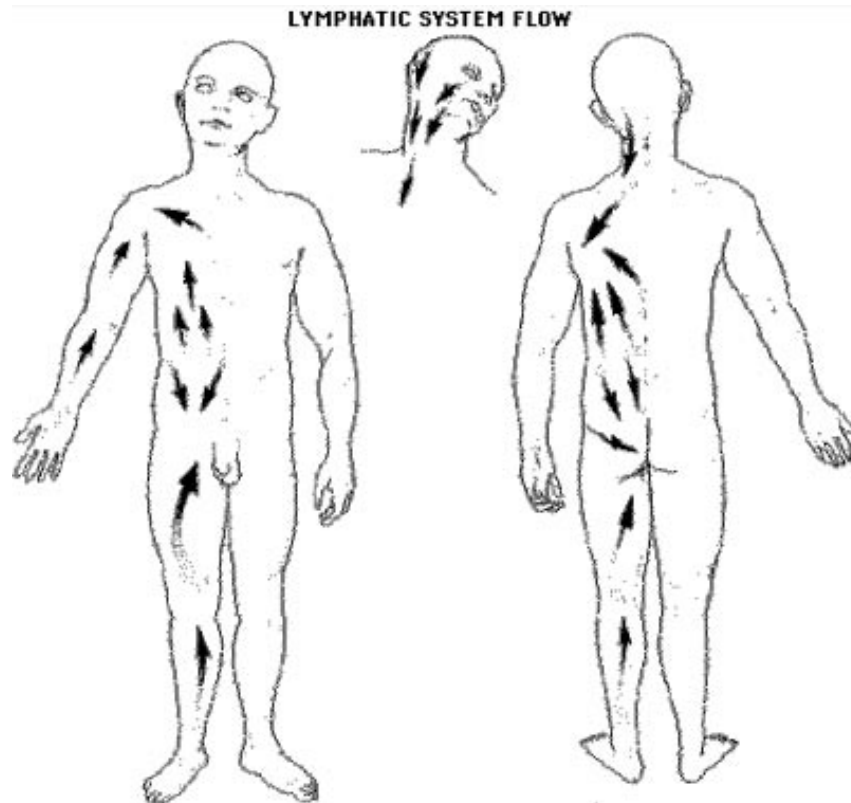


Then start at the base of the skull with your thumbs just behind the ears. Push under the skull into the neck with firm pressure slowly going toward the collar bone. Continue to do this, and each time move the thumbs closer together toward the spinal column. Doing this alone has relieved headaches and neck tension.



In addition, the following diagram provides directions for a massage with the primary purpose of boosting the immune system via the lymphatic system.

One other very important and easy technique is called “axillary traction” (armpit pull). If you are lying on your back, have another person stand at your head and place their hands under your armpits and gently pull straight forward toward their body. Your arms should remain at your sides. Your partner should maintain this traction or pull for 20 to 30 seconds. Then after a short rest, repeat the procedure (4 to 5 times).



Directions for mechanical stimulation for lymph flow as advocated by Vater & Asdonk