

Mesenteric Adenitis

Information for parents and/or caregivers

Welcome to the Southern Adelaide Local Health Network. This information sheet aims to answer any questions you may have about your child having mesenteric adenitis.

What is mesenteric adenitis?

Mesenteric adenitis means swollen (inflamed) lymph nodes in the tummy (abdomen), which cause pain. It is not usually serious and normally gets better without treatment. Mesenteric adenitis is a common cause of abdominal pain in children under 16 years.

Sometimes mesenteric adenitis is difficult to diagnose, and may be difficult to distinguish from other causes of abdominal pain such as appendicitis.

The name comes from mesentery, which is the part of the abdomen where the nodes are located. Adenitis means inflamed lymph glands. It can also be called mesenteric lymphadenitis.

What are lymph nodes?

Lymph nodes occur throughout the body. They are normally pea sized. They are a major part of the body's defence (immune) system. During an infection, lymph nodes swell and become painful while the immune system fights the infecting germs. They go back to normal after the infection is over.

Most people are familiar with lymph nodes in the neck that can swell when you have a sore throat or tonsillitis. In a similar way, it is the lymph nodes in the tummy (abdomen) that swell during a bout of mesenteric adenitis.

What causes mesenteric adenitis?

- Most cases are probably due to a viral infection. The virus triggers inflammation and swelling in the lymph nodes.
- The inflamed nodes then cause pain, tenderness and a high temperature (fever).

What are the symptoms of mesenteric adenitis?

The symptoms are:

- Abdominal (tummy) pain. The pain is usually in the middle of your tummy, near your belly button. The pain may also be felt in lower right-hand side of the tummy (called the right iliac fossa).
- High temperature (fever) and feeling generally unwell.
- Nausea (feeling sick) and/or have diarrhoea.
- You may have had a sore throat, or symptoms of a cold, before the abdominal pain started.

How is mesenteric adenitis diagnosed?

It is diagnosed from your symptoms and a doctor's examination. If you have (or your child has) typical symptoms and there are no signs of anything else causing the pain, then your doctor may think that mesenteric adenitis is likely.

It is difficult to prove the diagnosis, because the nodes are deep in the tummy (abdomen) and cannot be seen or felt.

The diagnosis often involves excluding other problems which could cause this type of pain, and then making a presumed diagnosis of mesenteric adenitis.

Sometimes it is difficult to make a diagnosis or to rule out other causes of abdominal pain, such as appendicitis.

- Wait and see, with another check by your doctor a few hours later to see if the symptoms have changed.
- A second opinion - for example, a referral to hospital for a surgeon's opinion.
- Tests to look for other conditions (see overleaf).

Are any tests needed?

There is no specific test that proves a definite diagnosis of mesenteric adenitis. However some tests may help in diagnosing other conditions which could be causing the pain. For example, blood tests and urine tests for infection, or scans (ultrasound or CT scan). Sometimes, the features on a scan are typical of swollen glands which may suggest the diagnosis of mesenteric adenitis.

What is the treatment?

- No specific treatment is necessary other than simple pain relief such as paracetamol (if needed). If infection with a germ (a bacterial infection) is suspected, you may be given antibiotic medication, but this is uncommon.
- Ensuring adequate hydration by drinking plenty of water and electrolyte solutions such as hydrolyte.
- Getting plenty of rest.

Your doctor will advise about the symptoms to look out for which suggest that you should be seen urgently for review.

The symptoms usually improve within a few days, and will almost always clear up completely within two weeks.

For more information

See your family doctor

For 24 hour health advice call - Health Direct Australia
1800 022 222

Parent Helpline **1300 364 100**

Local emergency department

Adapted from

Mesenteric Adenitis: What is mesenteric adenitis? Patient Information, 2014

Mesenteric lymphadenitis: Causes, symptoms & treatment.

www.webmd.com/children/mesentericlymphadenitis

www.emedicine.com/article/mesentericlymphadenitis

www.rch.org.au/generalmedicine/clinicalpracticeguidelines/abdominalpain

[www.uptodate.com\(2016\)causesofabdominalpaininchildren&adolescents](http://www.uptodate.com(2016)causesofabdominalpaininchildren&adolescents)

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This document has been reviewed and endorsed by consumers.