

What is lymphatic malformation?

- Lymphatic vessels are like blood vessels. The difference is they carry a clear fluid instead of blood.
- The lymphatic system collects extra fluid from the tissues of the body and carries it back to the veins.
- If the system is not formed normally, the fluid is slow to travel back to the veins and extra fluid collects in the body. This leads to swollen or enlarged soft tissues and bones. This is called a lymphatic malformation.
- The cause is not known. They are present at birth.
- A lymphatic malformation is sometimes seen in children who have other genetic conditions.



Superficial malformation

Where do they appear?

They are most often seen in the neck and armpit, but they can be in any part of the body. The changes can be seen just under the skin or deep in the body's tissues. They can stop growing or some will keep growing. The larger ones may get infected, bleed or cause injury to the area around it. A lymphatic malformation may grow quickly during puberty.



Deep malformation

How is this diagnosed?

An ultrasound may show some of the larger malformations in the fetus of a pregnant woman. After a baby is born, these larger malformations can be felt or seen during a physical exam. A medical history is also done. Imaging is often done after a baby is born, including:

- **MRI.** An MRI scanner uses a large magnet, radio waves and a computer to take pictures of parts inside of the body. It does not use radiation.
- **Ultrasound.** An ultrasound is not an x-ray. It works by using sound waves to make images of body parts. Your child will not hear or feel the sound waves.

How are lymphatic malformations treated?

Treatments for malformations vary. They may include:

- Watching for any further growth.
- Antibiotic medicine or surgery to decrease the size.
- Sclerotherapy. A chemical is injected into a blood vessel. This will cause the inside of the vessel to swell so blood cannot flow through it. The vessel will then collapse and form scar tissue.
- Surgery to remove all or part of the malformation. A lymphatic malformation may grow back. These tend to be the larger ones.

Other helpful resources for families

Children's Wisconsin: <https://childrenswi.org/medical-care/birthmarks-and-vascular-anomalies-center>

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any concerns or if your child has:

- Sudden swelling.
- An infection that will not heal.
- Bleeding that will not stop.
- Special health care needs not covered by this information.

This sheet was created to help you care for your child or family member. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment and follow-up.