
UNIT 29 LUMPS AND SWELLINGS

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29.1 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit you shall read about some swellings commonly seen in children. It is important that you be able to identify what is the cause of the swelling. You can make this out by noting where the swelling is and what type of swelling it is.

Objectives

After studying this unit, you should be able to

- identify the different types of swellings
- infer what each type of swelling indicates
- determine how each type of swelling is to be treated

29.2 WHAT IS A SWELLING OR LUMP

A swelling is an enlargement of any part of the body. A swelling may be soft or hard, large or small, filled with fluid, painful or painless. It may be confined with clear borders, or may merge with the surrounding tissues. The swelling or lump may be easily movable or may be attached to the underlying tissues.

Some swellings are described as benign tumours. Benign means that it is a new growth, but it is not cancerous. Examples of this will be lipoma (accumulation of fat cells in the skin) and sebaceous cyst (a cyst or soft swelling containing soft sticky material that is normally present in skin). **Some swellings are malignant tumours** i.e., they are dangerous and can be life threatening. We are not going to deal with malignant tumours in this Course.

Sometimes organs of the body get enlarged and look like swellings. This is seen in cases where the liver or spleen is enlarged, and looks like swellings in the abdomen. This is also seen in the case of enlarged lymph nodes, and is commonly seen in the neck.

When the swelling occurs due to injury to tissues, as in wounds and abscesses, the surrounding area is also hard and red and the swelling cannot be demarcated clearly.

Swellings may be localised or may affect whole limbs or larger part of the body like the abdomen. In cases of heart problems and kidney problems, the swelling is generalised and affects the whole body. In the early stages, it starts in the lower limbs, but is always symmetrical, affecting both sides equally.

Depending on the part of the body where the swelling is, and the accompanying symptoms, we can find out the cause of the swelling.

We shall now look at a few of the common swellings seen in children. We shall describe the type of swelling and what it indicates. The treatment of the swelling involves treatment of the underlying condition. We shall not discuss the treatment in detail since you have read about the conditions in previous Units and are aware as to what has to be done.

29.3 SWELLINGS IN THE HEAD AND NECK

29.3.1 Swelling in the Scalp or Head

- A soft painless swelling in the scalp is most probably a lipoma. This does not have to be treated except for cosmetic purposes (i.e., because of reasons of beauty), when it will have to be surgically removed.
- A soft painful swelling in the head after a fall or injury could be due to a haematoma (i.e., collection of blood under the skin). This will have to be surgically treated. Sometimes if there is an injury above the eyebrow, there is a black swelling around the eye on that side. This is because blood accumulates where the tissues are loose.

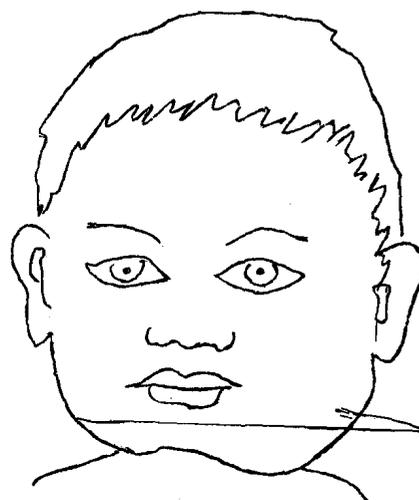
29.3.2 Swelling of the Eyes

- Swelling on the eyelid is because of "stye".
- Swelling of the eyes could be due to eyestrain or conjunctivitis.
- Swelling under the eyes is usually due to kidney disease. It is specially seen during morning hours and reduces during the day.

You have read about these in Unit 25.

29.3.3 Swelling on the Face

Swelling on either side of the face is usually because of mumps. You have read about this in Unit 14.

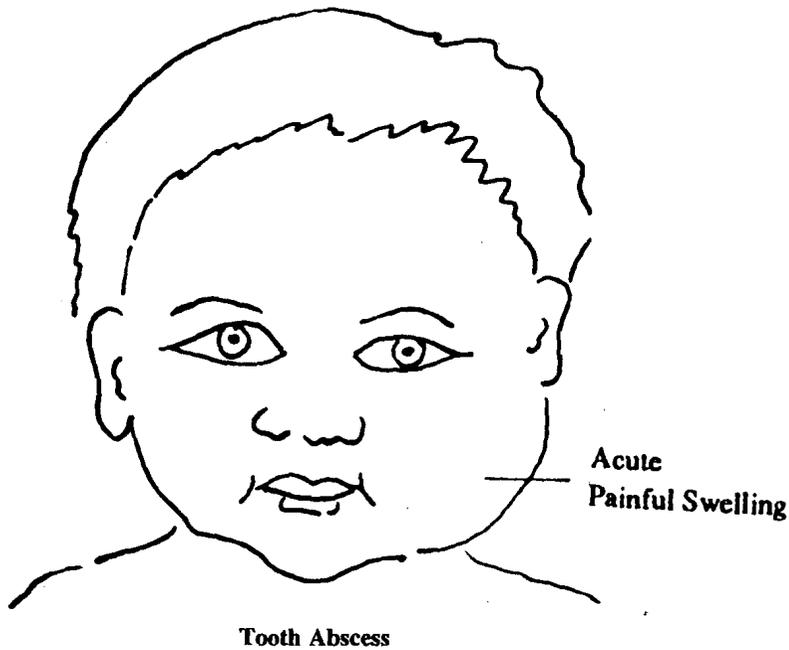


Enlarged
Parotid Glands

Mumps

29.3.4 Swelling in the Lower Jaw

Swelling in the lower jaw is usually due to an infection in a tooth or gum and is called a tooth abscess. This is painful and is always accompanied by toothache or swelling in the gums. If there is swelling under the jaw also, it is due to the swelling of the local lymph gland that drains that part of the mouth. This has to be referred to a doctor for treatment.



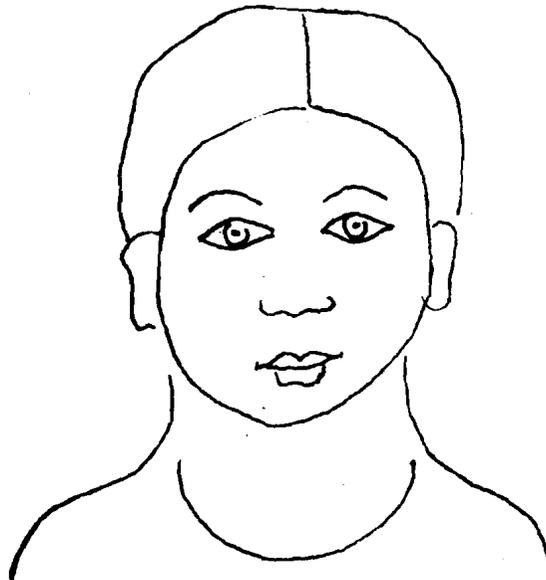
29.3.5 Swelling in the Neck

- Small lumps that are separate or have joined (matted) to make a big mass in the neck, usually at the back are lymph glands that are enlarged. Small glands are felt in cases where the children have heavy infestation of head lice. These disappear when the head lice are eradicated.
- Separate or joined (matted) lymph glands on either side of the neck, behind the ears, are commonly seen in tuberculosis. These are painless and last for many days or months, without producing any discomfort. As the disease progresses, the glands ulcerate and get matted. You have read about tuberculosis in Unit 14 and Unit 23.



Lymph Nodes Enlarged by TB

- The thyroid gland is situated in the front of the neck. When this gets enlarged, it forms a painless swelling that moves up and down with the swallowing movement. This is called "goitre" and is seen in places where there is less iodine in the water. This causes iodine deficiency disorders like cretinism which affect the functioning of the brain. Refer to the doctor for treatment. You have read about iodine deficiency diseases in Unit 16, Block 5 of this Course.



Goitre

29.4 SWELLINGS IN THE ABDOMEN

The abdomen contains the small and large intestines, the liver and the spleen. In the black, it contains the kidneys. In the lower part it contains the bladder, and in females, the uterus. All the organs are in the peritoneal cavity. So a swelling in the abdomen can be due to many causes.

29.4.1 Swelling due to Malnutrition

Commonly a prominent and enlarged abdomen is seen in children who are malnourished and, therefore, their abdominal walls have no elasticity.

29.4.2 Swelling due to Worm Infestation

A large abdomen may be because of worm infestation, where a number of worms occupy the intestines causing them to expand in size.

29.4.3 Swelling due to Rickets

A prominent abdomen is seen in rickets due to the forward bend of the spine in the abdominal region.

29.4.4 Swelling of the Liver

The liver is situated on the right side below the rib cage. It is enlarged in jaundice and in malaria. Both these conditions can be recognised by the enlarged liver.

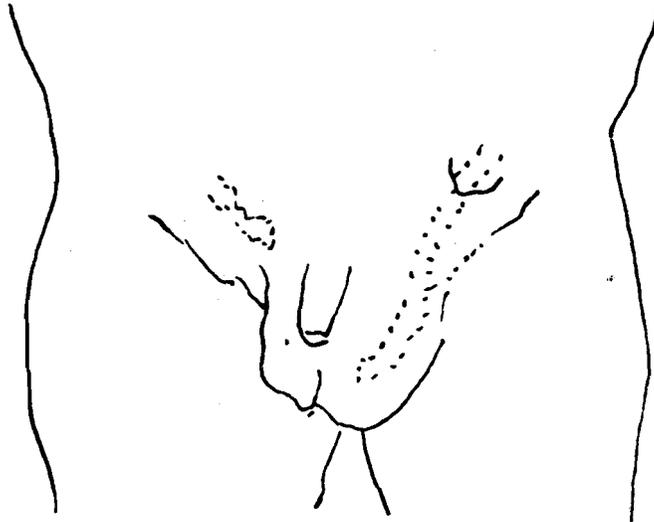
Sometimes in cases of liver disease, fluid accumulates in the peritoneal cavity, and the abdomen looks enlarged. On feeling the abdomen, we can make out that the swelling is due to fluid. Refer to a doctor for treatment.

29.4.5 Swelling due to Hernia

The abdominal wall is made up of muscles that hold the intestines in place. Sometimes due to a defect in the abdominal wall — this could be at birth or due to injury — the intestines push through the wall and appear as swellings in the abdomen. This is called "Hernia".

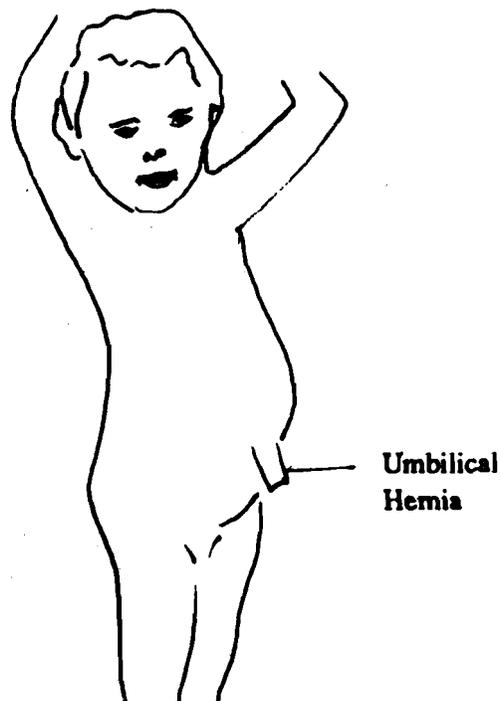
Hernia commonly occurs in two sites.

1) **Inguinal hernia:** This is seen on the side in the lower part of the abdomen, and can occur on one side or both sides at the same time. It is more common in little boys because of a weakness in the abdominal wall.



Inguinal Hernia

2) **Umbilical hernia:** The intestines push through the umbilicus and this appears as a swelling in the umbilicus (navel).

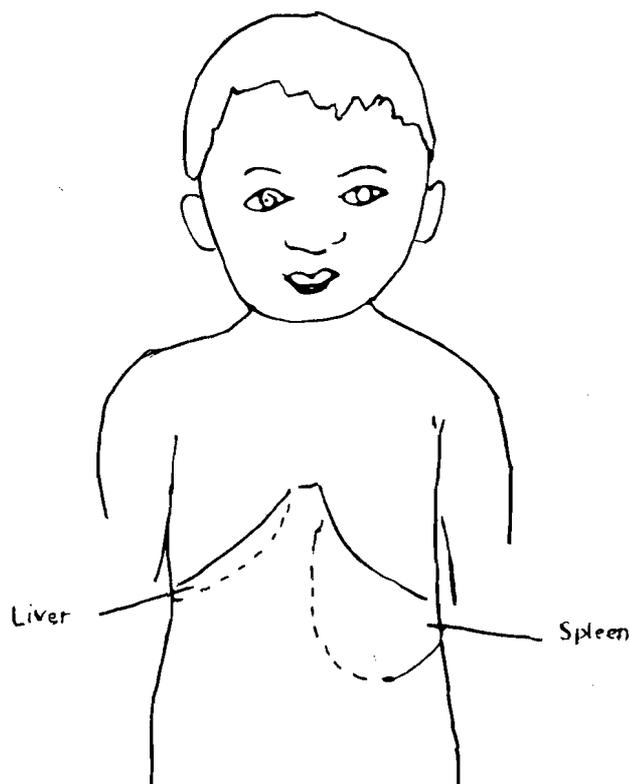


Umbilical Hernia

All hernias can be recognised by the site and also because they enlarge when the child coughs or sneezes. This is because when the person coughs or sneezes, there is increased pressure in the abdomen which pushes out the intestines. Normally they can be pushed back by the hand. The danger is that the intestines may get twisted, or the blood supply may be cut off, causing serious illness. Therefore, all hernias have to be referred for surgical treatment.

29.4.6 Swelling of the Spleen

An enlarged spleen is seen in chronic anaemia, and in cases of repeated attacks of malaria. It is also enlarged in typhoid. An enlarged spleen can be felt by a doctor.



Enlarged Spleen in Malaria

29.5 SWELLINGS IN THE LIMBS

29.5.1 Swellings due to Filariasis

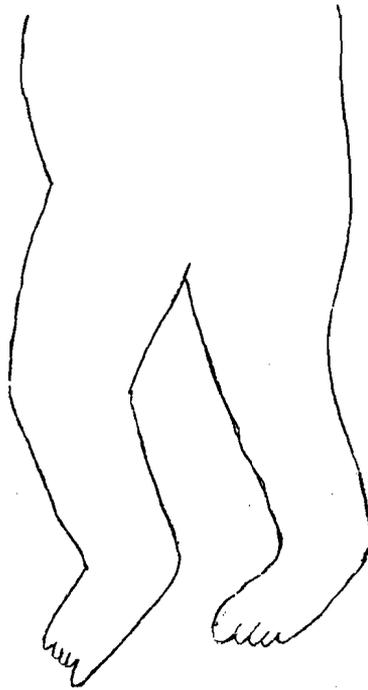
Apart from local causes that occur in other parts of the body, the limbs may be affected in filariasis. Initially, there is swelling of the lymph duct which is seen as a painful red streak along the arm or leg. Later, there is swelling of the whole limb which is red and swollen. This is an acute condition and has to be treated with antibiotics immediately.

29.5.2 Swelling due to Vitamin Deficiency

In severe cases of Beri-beri (deficiency of Vitamin B₁) the lower limbs get swollen and painful. This is called oedema.

29.5.3 Swelling due to Kidney Infection

In rare cases of kidney disease called 'Nephrotic Syndrome', the whole body of the child may be swollen. This starts in the lower limbs and spreads gradually.



Swelling of Lower Limbs in Heart and Kidney Conditions

29.6 ABSCESS

Abscess is due to infection or injury is seen as a swelling. Here the surrounding tissues will be painful and red. If there is pus inside, it may have to incised (cut) and the pus drained.

Insect bites or even injection sites may turn into abscesses. Therefore, finding out the history of the swelling is important.

29.7 URTICARIA

Red itchy lumps all over the body, or around a particular lesion is called urticaria or angio-neurotic oedema. This is a severe allergic reaction and can be due to allergies to specific foods, house dust, insect bites or medicines. This is a very uncomfortable condition producing uncontrollable itching, and the whole body may quickly swell up. The danger in this condition is that the swelling may occur even inside the throat, and the oedema (swelling) in the glottis may result in sudden blocking of the air passages. Therefore, while a mild urticaria may be treated with anti-allergic lotions or ointments applied locally, and some medicines, severe cases should be referred immediately for treatment.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1)
 - a) Matted lymph glands in the neck are commonly due to
 - b) When intestines push through the abdominal wall it is called
 - c) Goitre is due to and can be prevented by
 - d) A large swelling in the left side of the abdomen is due to an enlarged and is commonly seen in
- 2) State whether the following statements are correct or incorrect.
 - a) Hernias do not have to be treated.
 - b) TB lymph glands cannot be treated.
 - c) Enlarged thyroid is called mumps.
 - d) A tooth abscess is not painful.

29.8 SUMMING UP

A swelling is an enlargement of any part of the body. It may be hard or soft, painful or painless, large or small, may be localised or affect a larger part of the body, may be benign or malignant, filled with fluid, it may stand out from or merge with the surrounding tissues.

Soft painless swelling on the head is usually due to lipoma.

Painful swelling on the head after a fall or injury is due to collection of blood under the skin.

Swelling in the eyes could be due to stye, conjunctivitis, kidney infection or eyestrains, depending on the location.

Swelling on the face is due to mumps.

Swelling in the neck could be due to tuberculosis or thyroid depending upon the location of the swelling.

Children who are malnourished or have worm infestation have swollen abdomen or are suffering from rickets.

Abdominal swelling could also be due to enlargement of the liver or spleen or due to hernia.

Filariasis infection in kidney and vitamin B deficiency are common causes of swelling of lower limbs.

Urticaria may occur all over the body or around a particular lesion due to allergic reaction. It causes intense itching. Severe urticaria has to be treated immediately.

29.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISE

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1)
 - a) Tuberculosis
 - b) Hernia
 - c) Iodine deficiency, eating iodized salt.
 - d) Spleen, malaria.
- 2)
 - a) Incorrect
 - b) Incorrect
 - c) Incorrect, it is called goitre.
 - d) Incorrect