

Lymphatic System



The lymphatic system is part of the body's natural defence against disease. It is made up of a collection of lymph nodes connected together by lymphatic vessels. The lymphatic system contains lymph fluid which carries many defensive antibodies and white cells which help to protect the body. The lymph nodes act like filters in the main drainage channels.

The lymph nodes act like filters in the main drainage channels. Small lymph nodes are found mainly in the neck, under both armpits and in the groin. Other nodes are found in the chest and abdomen. Some nodes are as small as a pinhead, while others are as large as a five penny piece. Lymph vessels collect the lymph fluid from the breasts and drain into groups of lymph nodes in the armpit. Often, cancer cells break away from a [malignant](#) tumour and enter

the lymphatic system, they travel to the nodes, where they may set up new growths. Therefore with any breast operation, the surgeon normally removes lymph glands from under your arms. This is to check whether cancer cells have spread from the breast. It helps the doctor decide whether other treatment is needed. Sometimes all the lymph glands under the armpit may be removed. Sometimes just a few are removed, and this is called sampling.
