



Education

Testicular Cancer

What is testicular cancer?

Testicular cancer is uncontrolled growth of abnormal cells in a testicle. This growth becomes a lump or tumor. Cells can break away from the initial tumor to form new growths elsewhere in the body.

The testicles are part of the male reproductive system. They are in a sac of loose skin, called the scrotum or scrotal sac, which lies directly below the base of the penis.

How does it occur?

The cause of testicular cancer is not known, but there are several risk factors. For example, men who have or have had an undescended testicle, whether or not it was surgically corrected, have a higher risk of developing testicular cancer. An undescended testicle is a condition in which one or both testicles did not complete the natural passage from inside the abdomen down into the scrotum before birth. Usually the cancer develops on the side of the undescended testicle, but sometimes the cancer is in the other, normally descended testicle.

Some other risk factors are:

- a family history of testicular cancer
- abnormal development of the testicles, penis, or kidneys
- being HIV positive.

Testicular cancer is most common in men between the ages of 20 and 39. It is rare after the age of forty. Also, it rarely occurs in African-Americans.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of a tumor in the testicle are:

- a painless lump or swelling in a testicle
- pain or discomfort in a testicle or in the scrotum
- any enlargement of a testicle or change in the way it feels
- a feeling of heaviness in the scrotum
- a dull ache in the lower abdomen or back
- a sudden collection of fluid in the scrotum.

Many of these symptoms can be caused by conditions other than cancer. It is important to examine your testicles often. Report any symptoms right away to a health care provider to determine the cause.

How is it diagnosed?

Your health care provider will ask about your medical history and examine you. You may have the following tests:

- blood tests
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- an ultrasound scan of the testicles.

How is it treated?

You will have surgery to remove the testicle and spermatic cord through an incision (cut) in the groin (an operation called an orchiectomy). Other treatments may include:

- chemotherapy, which uses anticancer drugs to kill cancer cells
- radiation therapy, which is the use of high-energy rays from a machine outside the body to shrink the tumor and kill cancer cells.

How long will the effects last?

More than 95% of testicular cancer can be cured. The earlier the cancer is found, the more likely the treatment will be successful. Testicular cancer, like all cancers, can recur. Men who have had cancer in one testicle have a slightly increased risk of cancer in the other testicle. Regular exams after treatment are important. Your health care provider will recommend frequent checkups that include blood tests and CT scans (computerized x-rays).

How can I take care of myself?

- Follow the full course of treatment prescribed by your health care provider.
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Recognize that having the cancer is an added stress in your life. Take more time for your important relationships and for rest.
- Be candid with your family and your health care providers about your concerns.
- Ask your health care provider any questions you have about the course of the disease, treatments, side effects of the treatments, support groups, and anything else that concerns you.
- Find a counselor to help you deal with difficult issues.
- Spend time with people and activities you enjoy.

For more information, contact:

- American Cancer Society, Inc. Phone: 800-ACS-2345 (800-227-2345) Web site: <http://www.cancer.org>
- AMC Cancer Research Center and Foundation Phone: 800-525-3777 Web site: <http://www.amc.org>
- National Cancer Institute Phone: 800-4-CANCER (800-422-6237) Web sites: <http://cis.nci.nih.gov> and <http://www.cancer.gov>

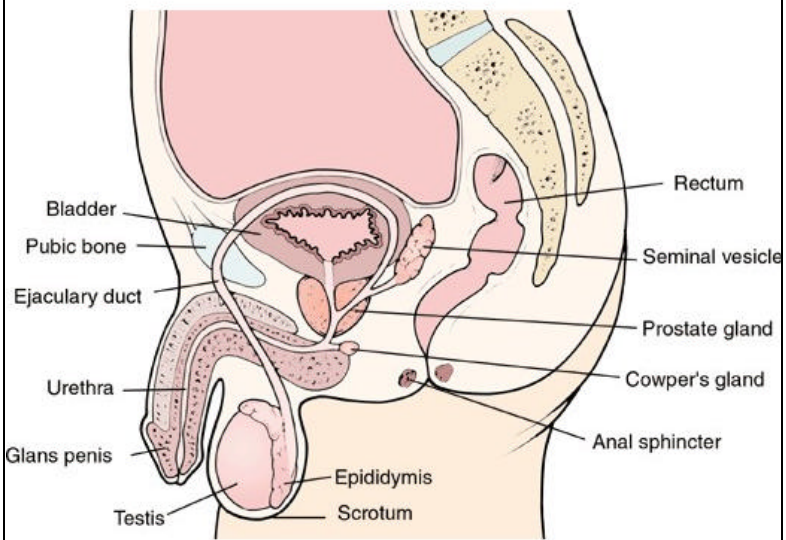
How can I help prevent testicular cancer?

Because the cause of testicular cancer is not known, health care providers do not know how to prevent it. However, researchers are actively studying possible methods of prevention, such as diet, supplements, and drugs.

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Male Pelvis: Side View



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