

Testicular awareness

All men should be aware of the normal look and feel of their testicles and check with their doctor should any unusual signs or symptoms occur. Regular testicular self examination (TSE) is not recommended as it may generate more anxiety than it relieves. What is important is that any discomfort, pain, swelling, or change to the normal condition of the testicles is reported to a doctor without delay.

Remember:

Testicular cancer is one of the most curable cancers when found early. Men need to see a doctor if they find any difference between their testicles or if they are in a high risk group. Don't let embarrassment get in the way of seeing your doctor and discussing the issue of testicular cancer.



Cancer Council
Helpline
13 11 20
www.cancerwa.asn.au

For support and information on cancer and cancer-related issues, call Cancer Council Helpline. This is a confidential service. Available Statewide for the cost of a local call Monday to Friday 8 am – 6 pm



Funded by
Community
Donations



Testicular
cancer

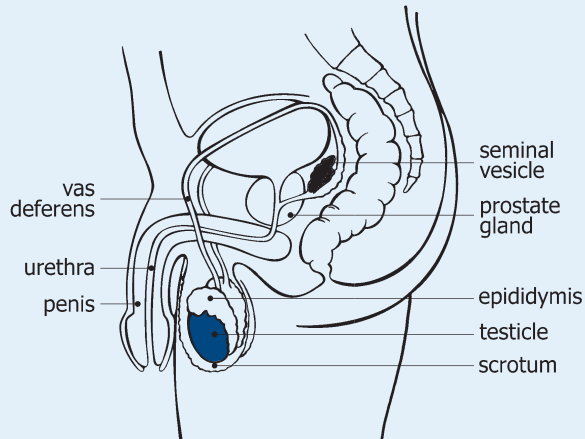


Men's cancers

The testicles

The testicles (or testes) are two small oval-shaped organs in the scrotum, that hangs below the penis. Often one testicle hangs a little lower than the other one. This is perfectly normal.

The testicles are the primary male reproductive organ. From the age of puberty, around 14 years of age, the testicles make sperm, the male reproductive cell. They also make the hormone testosterone. This hormone is responsible for male characteristics such as a deep voice, body and facial hair growth, muscle development and sexual feelings (libido).



What is testicular cancer?

Like other cancers, testicular cancer is a disease of the body's cells. Sometimes cells don't grow normally. When these abnormal cells reproduce they form a lump or tumour. A tumour can be either malignant (cancer) or benign (non-cancerous). In testicular cancer the cells in the testicle have grown abnormally. The cancer usually grows in only one testicle.

If the cancer is not treated it may spread to other parts of the body. Although the causes of testicular cancer are not well understood, recent developments in treatment make it one of the most curable cancers.

How common is this cancer?

It is not a very common form of cancer, but it is one of the most common cancers in males aged between 15 and 45 years. In Western Australia in 2008, 76 cases of testicular cancer were diagnosed and there were 4 deaths from this cancer.

What are the signs and symptoms of testicular cancer?

The most common sign of testicular cancer is a swelling or a small hard lump in part of one testicle. Most males with testicular cancer notice a difference between the shape and texture of their testicles. One grows larger, becomes harder or changes shape compared with the other. Any difference between the two testicles should be treated as an early warning sign and should be checked by your doctor.

Tumours are often painless but some men have described an ache in their lower stomach or groin, or a pain in one of their testicles. Some describe a feeling of 'heaviness' in the scrotum.

Most lumps are not cancerous, but a man who experiences any of the changes mentioned earlier or any discomfort in the testicular area, should contact their doctor immediately. Prompt diagnosis and treatment can cure most cases of testicular cancer.

Don't wait or think that because there is no pain that there is nothing to worry about. If left untreated, the cancer can spread to other parts of the body.

Treatment for testicular cancer

An operation to surgically remove the cancer affected testicle (an orchidectomy) is the usual treatment for testicular cancer. Chemotherapy or radiotherapy, or a combination of these, may also be used to treat testicular cancer. The type of treatment will depend on the type of cancer, and whether it has spread beyond the testicle.

Some treatments do have side effects. Any effect on fertility is usually temporary, and the remaining testicle produces enough sperm to maintain fertility. In a small number of cases fertility may be a problem. Speak to your doctor about fertility before you start treatment. There is not normally any change in a man's ability to have erections or engage in sexual intercourse.

Those at risk

Although the cause of testicular cancer is not fully understood, it is known that a man who has had an undescended testicle (known as cryptorchidism), is at increased risk of developing testicular cancer later in life. This is still a risk whether it was treated during childhood or not. Please seek advice from a doctor.

Other risk factors include:

- Being a man aged between 20 and 40
- Having a father or brother with testicular cancer
- Having a wasted (atrophied) testicle
- Previous inflammation of a testicle caused by mumps
- History of fertility problems
- Previous testicular cancer

If you are at higher risk of testicular cancer, discuss this with your doctor.

