

Testicular Cancer And Self Exam

What is testicular cancer?

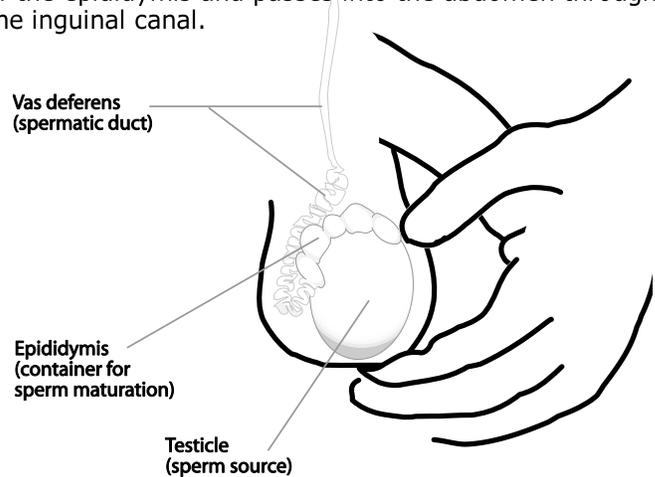
Testicular cancer is the most common cancer in males age 15-40. Studies have shown that many men may delay seeking medical attention for as long as three to six months after detecting a testicular abnormality; however, as with many cancers, early detection and prompt treatment are key in improving the outcome. Since early detection and treatment are important, properly perform a monthly testicular self-examination (TSE) and discuss any abnormal or unusual findings with your health care provider promptly. Doing the exam regularly once a month may allow you to detect any changes that may have occurred.

RISK FACTORS FOR TESTICULAR CANCER

The risk for developing testicular cancer is increased in men whose testicles did not descend from the body into the scrotum at birth or shortly thereafter. Previous cancer in the other testicle also increases risk. Testicular cancer is 5 times more common in Caucasian men than black men. It is not clear whether prior history of testicular cancer in a family member increases risk. Prior trauma or sexually transmitted diseases do not increase risk.

What is normal?

Normal testicles usually feel smooth and spongy or rubbery and measure from 3.5 cm to 5.5 cm in length. The left usually lies slightly lower than the right. The epididymis is a tubular, comma-shaped structure that lies on the top and back of each testicle. The vas deferens is a cord-like structure that begins at the tail of the epididymis and passes into the abdomen through the inguinal canal.



What is not normal?

When doing a TSE, you are trying to feel any lumps or other irregularities on the surface of the testicle. The lump may feel like a small nodule or pea and may or may not be painful. You should also note if there is any swelling or hardness of the entire testicle or swelling inside the scrotum around the testicle. Remember that any lump should be evaluated by your health care provider. Other symptoms which should prompt you to see your health care provider include:

-  A heavy sensation in the scrotum
-  A persistent dull ache in the lower abdomen or groin
-  Enlargement or tenderness of breast tissue or significant shrinking of a testicle.

HOW TO PERFORM A TESTICULAR SELF-EXAMINATION

- ★ Testicles should be examined once a month.
- ★ The examination is easier to do after a shower when the scrotum is relaxed.
- ★ Examine each testicle one at a time.
- ★ Use both hands to examine each testicle.
- ★ Hold the testicle between the fingers and thumbs of the hands.
- ★ Roll the testicle between the thumbs and fingers with gentle pressure avoiding pain or discomfort.

