

# Pocket Rocket

A quick guide to penile health and penile cancer

Penile cancer is rare, affecting over 600 men a year. This leaflet is designed to promote good penile health and help men recognise the possible symptoms.

ORCHID  
FIGHTING MALE CANCER

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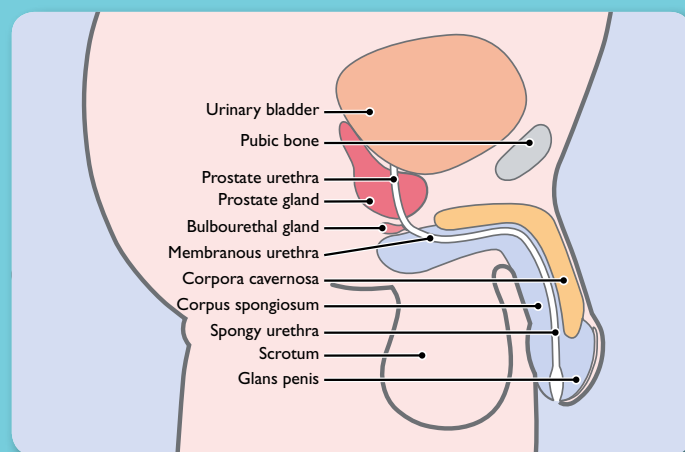
If you have any queries regarding the information contained in this quick guide please contact the Orchid Nurses on 0203 745 7318 or email: helpline@orchid-cancer.org.uk for further advice, support and other information. References are available on request. To be reviewed 2017.

The Information Standard

Certified Member

## Facts about the penis

### STRUCTURE OF THE PENIS



The penis is made up of three chambers of spongy tissue that contain muscle, blood vessels and nerves. The **corpora cavernosa** makes up two of the chambers that are located on both sides of the upper part of the penis. The **corpus spongiosum** surrounds the urethra or water pipe and expands to make the **glans**.

### Affectionate terms for the 'old gentleman'.

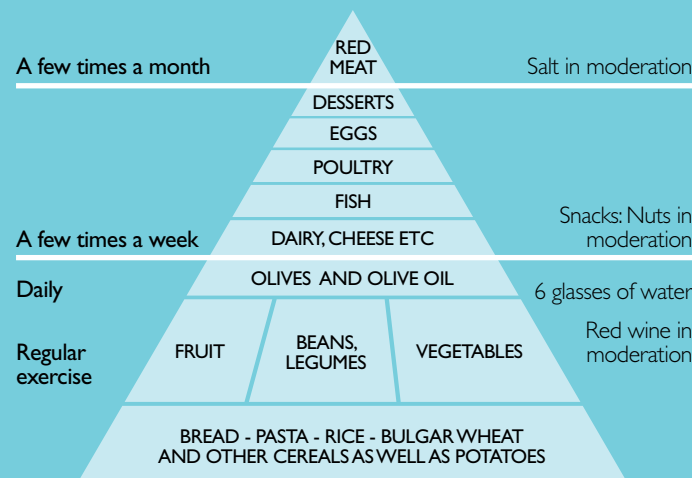
Dick, cock, boner, member, tool, shaft, dong, wang, ding-a-ling, ding dong, love muscle, heat-seeking love missile, wedding tackle, bat, rod, pole, love shaft, love stick, tadger, chopper, disco stick, joystick, knob, manhood, man muscle, master of ceremonies, middle leg, one-eyed monster, one-eyed trouser snake, plonker, purple-headed soldier, tool, tripod, trouser snake, maypole, silent flute, credentials, matrimonial peacemaker, tadger, Master John Goodfellow, gentleman usher.

## DOES SIZE MATTER?

- The average flaccid penis measures 3-4 inches from tip to base. Most penises are the same size when erect which is actually 5-7 inches
- Smoking can shorten a man's erections
- The largest penis in the animal kingdom belongs to the blue whale and is a whopping 11 feet long, the smallest at 0.2 inches, belongs to the shrew

## The Mediterranean Diet

A healthy and varied diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables should provide the body with all the substances needed to maintain good penile health. In general, it is thought a diet similar to that consumed in **Mediterranean countries** is one of the most healthy and beneficial diets and may reduce the risk of some cancers. The pyramid diagram below illustrates daily, weekly and monthly recommendations for this type of balanced diet.



**Vitamin D** - is absorbed from sunlight and may help protect the body from some types of cancer. Only 15 minutes daily is needed however and prolonged exposure to the sun can cause skin cancer.



## What can go wrong?

### Balanitis

This is a term used to describe inflammation of the penis. and is much more common in uncircumcised men. The glans may become swollen, red and painful and uncircumcised men may find it difficult to retract their foreskin. It can be caused by the yeast infection candida (which causes vaginal thrush in women) and bacterial infection including sexually transmitted ones (STIs). Other causes can be vigorous penile activity causing too much friction (for instance sexual intercourse) or chemical irritants from toiletries. It can be treated by using an anti-yeast cream and tablets if due to thrush or sometimes steroidal cream to reduce inflammation. In some cases antibiotics may be needed to treat STIs.

### Condyloma (Genital warts)

These may appear in the form of cauliflower shaped, pinkish growths around the penis. They may or may not cause itching, soreness or irritation and are a direct result of becoming infected with a type of virus called the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). There are over 100 types of HPV which are usually spread through skin to skin contact and can be responsible for conditions such as warts and verrucas. They can be treated using special creams and ointments and can also be frozen or burned off using additional medical procedures if necessary. Unfortunately none of the treatments is a definitive cure and they may reoccur in the future.

Practising safe sex with a condom is thought to reduce the risk of HPV infection as well as other STIs.

### Cysts

Cysts can occur anywhere on the body including the shaft of the penis and appear as small lumps. They are usually painless. If they are causing symptoms they can be surgically removed.

### Lichen Planus

This may appear as a mauve, itchy rash which more commonly occurs on the wrists or shins. It will usually resolve without any treatment.

### Pearly Penile Papules

Around 10-20% of men may notice these small pearl like bumps which usually affect the crown of the penis. They are not infectious and do not require any treatment.

### Peyronies disease

This is a rare non cancerous condition that can cause the shaft of the penis to curve due to hardened tissue forming. This may cause the penis to bend on erection and make sexual intercourse painful. It can be treated with surgical and non-surgical procedures.

### HARD FACTS

- The average male orgasm lasts 6 seconds. Women get 23 seconds
- The average number of times a man will ejaculate in his lifetime: 7,200
- The average number of times a man will ejaculate from masturbation: 2,000

- The average speed of ejaculation: 28 miles per hour
- Average number of erections per day for a man: 11
- The average number of erections a man has during the night: 9



Orchid has a **Male Cancer Helpline** manned by specialist nurses on **0808 802 0010** or email **helpline@orchid-cancer.org.uk**

## Possible risk factors for penile cancer

- ▶ Penile cancer is more likely to occur in older men aged over 50 although it can still occur in younger men.
- ▶ Phimosis - This is a condition found in uncircumcised men and stops men from being able to retract their foreskin fully. It can occur due to skin inflammation and scarring and will reduce the ability of a man to clean his penis thoroughly and notice any abnormal changes.
- ▶ A condition called lichen sclerosus et atrophicus is found in a small percentage of men with penile cancer but has not been definitively linked as a causative factor in its development.
- ▶ Smoking appears to increase the risk of penile cancer.
- ▶ Having HIV can increase the risk.
- ▶ Men who have been treated with drugs called psoralens followed by ultraviolet a light therapy, abbreviated as PUVA, for psoriasis are at a higher risk of penile cancer.
- ▶ Infection with two types of the HPV virus spread via sexual intercourse (see opposite); type 16 and 18, are linked to the development of some penile cancers and nearly 50% of men who are diagnosed with the most common type of penile cancer will have evidence of being infected.

**Melanoma** - although very rare, this type of skin cancer can also affect the penis. Exposure to sunlight is not needed as skin cells can become cancerous on any part of the body.

## Signs and symptoms

Cancer can develop anywhere in the penis but the most common places are on the glans or foreskin.

Men with penile cancer may experience the following symptoms or signs. However similar symptoms can also be caused by non-cancerous conditions.

**If you are concerned about a symptom or sign on this list, please talk with your doctor.**

- ▶ A growth or ulcer, especially on the glans or foreskin,
- ▶ Changes in the colour of the penis
- ▶ Skin thickening on the penis
- ▶ Irregular swelling at the end of the penis
- ▶ Persistent discharge with foul odour beneath the foreskin
- ▶ Blood coming from the tip of the penis or under the foreskin
- ▶ Irregular or growing bluish-brown flat lesions or marks beneath the foreskin or on the body of the penis
- ▶ Reddish, velvety rash beneath the foreskin
- ▶ Small, crusty bumps beneath the foreskin

### TIPS

- ▶ Always practice good hygiene especially if you have not been circumcised. Make sure that you wash your penis and under your foreskin daily. Try and use plain soap or chemical free toiletries to avoid potential irritation. Men whose jobs may cause their hands to become dirty should try and wash them before and after passing urine.
- ▶ If you have an active sexual lifestyle with multiple sexual partners it is advisable to use protection such as a condom.
- ▶ If you have trouble in retracting your foreskin it may be beneficial to see your GP for advice.

**If you are being treated for any penile condition which does not improve after treatment then you should ask your GP to refer you to a hospital specialist called a urologist for further assessment.**