

## Ball Basics

A quick guide to testicular health and testicular cancer

Although still rare compared to other cancers, testicular cancer is the most common cancer in younger men aged between 15 and 45 with around 2,200 cases being diagnosed each year.

Orchid has produced this leaflet to help raise awareness of testicular health.

**ORCHID**  
FIGHTING MALE CANCER

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## Facts about testicles

### Testicle terminology.

**The Testicles aka:** your acorns, baby-makers, back wheels, baubles, bum balls, chestnuts, cods, conkers, cream crackers, doodads, figs, globes, goolies, hairy conkers, heirlooms, jingle berries, knackers, knob nuts, love apples, love nuts, love spuds, marble halls, meaty bites, nads, nobby halls, nuggets, nutmegs, nuts, plums, pounders, rocks.

**Scrotum aka:** ball bag, bag-of-tricks, ball-basket, ball-sack, daddy-bag, happy-sack, sack-o'-nuts, sleeping-bag, sperm-sack, tadpole-carrier, tool-bag, winky-bag.

### The testicles

- ▶ Hang majestically behind the penis, packed in the scrotum or ball bag.
- ▶ It is normal for one testicle to be slightly larger than the other, although the size and shape of each should be roughly the same.
- ▶ Start growing around the age of 11-12 and by early adulthood are ripe and ready measuring in at about 2 inches long (5cm), nearly one inch in breadth (2.5cm) and about 1.2 inches (2.7cm) in height. Weighing in at around 10-14 grams.
- ▶ Produce sperm and testosterone, the male sex hormone and are located outside of the body in the nad sack because sperm develop best at a temperature several degrees cooler than normal internal body temperature, at around 94.6 ° Fahrenheit. Ball sweating helps the nad bag stay cool.

## Testosterone

Testosterone is essential to the development of the reproductive organs and other male characteristics such as:

- ▶ mood
- ▶ body and facial hair
- ▶ low voice
- ▶ the ability to have an erection (hard-on, stiffy)
- ▶ muscle development
- ▶ sex drive (libido)

**Keeping fit** and avoiding too much fatty fried food, sugar and caffeine, can keep testosterone healthy.

### DID YOU KNOW?

A man's ability to raise and lower his testicles is called the cremasteric reflex. The cremasteric muscles often move the testicles naturally, but a male can actually control the movement by tensing or relaxing his stomach and using the pubococcygeus muscle.

When a man receives a blow to his testicles he usually feels excruciating pain in his gut. The nerves in the genitals are connected to nerves in the abdomen and the pain travels up them via the same pathway the testicles took when they descended into the scrotum (inguinal canal).

### Testosterone friendly food:

**Asparagus;** Rich in vitamin E, considered to stimulate the production of testosterone.

**Almonds and nuts;** A source of natural fatty acids, which provide the raw material for hormonal production.

**Eggs/Avocado;** Source of vitamin B5 and B6 (avocado B6) which help balance hormone levels.

**Brown rice, white meat (chicken), salmon, oysters, peanuts, beans and cheeses;** A good source of zinc. Testosterone is dependent on zinc.

**Bananas;** Rich in B vitamins like riboflavins which are necessary for testosterone production.

**Blueberries, cantaloupe, pineapple, citrus fruits, spinach, tomatoes and red peppers;** These are all rich in vitamin A, essential for the normal function of the reproductive organs.

Orchid is the UK's leading charity dedicated to supporting men and their families who are affected by male-specific cancers – testicular, prostate and penile.

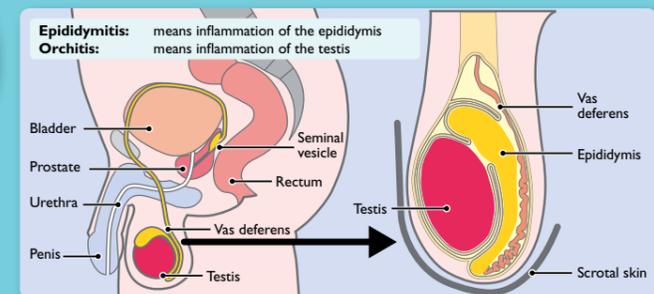
Established in 1996, Orchid works to improve the lives of people affected by male cancers through a world class research programme, educational campaigns and raising awareness and an extensive support service.

## Non-cancerous testicular conditions

The following conditions may often have similar symptoms to testicular cancer and may cause worry.

### Epididymo-orchitis

This is inflammation of the epididymis and /or testis usually due to infection. It is particularly common in young males aged 15-30 and may occur as a result of a urinary infection or sexually transmitted disease. Ball swelling tends to occur quite rapidly and is often described as 'bloody painful'. Swelling can take a few weeks to fully settle and will usually require a two week course of strong antibiotics.



### Varicocele

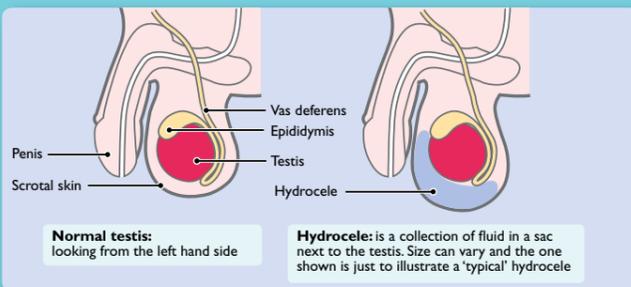
For more information visit: [www.yourprivates.org.uk](http://www.yourprivates.org.uk)

This is a collection of dilated veins in the scrotum (think varicose veins). It often affects men between the ages of 15-25 and can affect one or both of the testicles. Normally the veins in the spermatic cord are undetectable. When they become distended they have been medically described as feeling like a 'bag of worms'. Varicoceles can vary in size and are usually not painful but may cause a 'dragging' sensation. They may affect 15% of the male population and are associated with male infertility.

## Non-cancerous testicular conditions

### Hydrocele

The testis is surrounded by a protective tissue sac which produces a lubricating fluid to allow your baubles to move freely. Excess fluid usually drains into the veins in the scrotum. However, if this drainage route has been affected by infection or trauma, fluid may accumulate and is called a hydrocele. A hydrocele will often feel like a small fluid filled balloon and may cause a chronic ache or discomfort. It can often be surgically repaired if it becomes too problematic or too big, but is usually treated depending on whether bothersome symptoms are present.



For more information visit: [www.yourprivates.org.uk](http://www.yourprivates.org.uk)

### Epididymal cysts

These are small fluid filled cysts, which may contain semen (sperm). They are usually about the size of a pea but can be larger. They are smooth and spherical and tend to be found in the head of the epididymis. They are not cancerous and can be aspirated (drained) or removed surgically.

### DID YOU KNOW?

A man's testicles can increase in size by up to 50% when he is aroused.

The testes of the Right Whale are thought to be the biggest in the animal kingdom. Each thought to weigh around 500kg each!

### Testicular Pain

OK we have all had it. Sometimes there is no apparent reason for it but it is pretty annoying anyway. There are several factors which can be involved including stress, wearing underwear that is too tight as well as sexual arousal with an erection but without ejaculation (also known as blue balls). If a man is very physically active there is always a chance that they may strain their lower back or groin while playing sport, which then may irritate nerves in the lower body and cause testicular discomfort. Likewise, dodgy or damaged hips can cause pelvic and groin pain.

Pain from blue balls will usually go after a few hours while chronic sports damage may need further input from a GP or physiotherapist.

For further information on non-cancerous testicular conditions go to: [www.yourprivates.org.uk](http://www.yourprivates.org.uk)

## Possible risk factors for testicular cancer

- ▶ Men born with an undescended testicle (cryptorchidism) where the testicle fails to descend into the scrotum. (Initially testicles develop in the abdomen and it is only at birth or during the first year of life that they descend into the nad sack).
- ▶ A brother/father with testicular cancer.
- ▶ A previous history of testicular cancer.
- ▶ Caucasian men have a higher risk of testicular cancer than men from other ethnic groups.
- ▶ Men with HIV are more likely to develop testicular cancer.
- ▶ Poorly functioning testicles (sperm production/fertility).
- ▶ There is some evidence which indicates that men who are taller than average have an increased risk of testicular cancer.

### Controversial

- ▶ A sedentary (not very active) life style may increase the risk.
- ▶ Repeated trauma (rather than inevitable knocks) may increase risk.
- ▶ Recent research has suggested that men who smoke cannabis on a regular basis and develop testicular cancer may develop a more aggressive type.

## Signs and Symptoms

- ▶ a small, firm, usually painless lump in or on one or both testicles
- ▶ swelling pain, discomfort or enlargement of the testicle
- ▶ an unusual difference between the testicles
- ▶ a sudden collection of fluid in the scrotum
- ▶ a dull ache in the lower part of the abdomen, the scrotum or groin

### Rarely

- ▶ pain in the back, not relieved by painkillers due to enlarged lymph glands
- ▶ breast and nipple tenderness (gynaecomastia) associated with changes in the body caused by some rarer types of testicular cancer which may occur in younger men

If caught early testicular cancer is around 98% curable. Treatment will usually involve removal of the testicle (orchidectomy) through the groin, (no cut will be made to the scrotum itself) during a minor operation. An orchidectomy may be the only treatment a man may need with an early diagnosis, but even if testicular cancer is found at a later stage and has spread outside the testicle, the majority of men will be cured with the addition of some chemotherapy treatment.

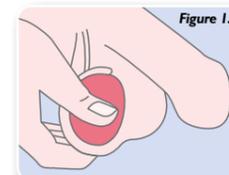
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Orchid has a **Male Cancer Helpline** manned by specialist nurses on Mondays and Wednesdays 10am-5pm **0808 802 0010** or email [helpline@orchid-cancer.org.uk](mailto:helpline@orchid-cancer.org.uk)



## Testicular Self-Examination (TSE)

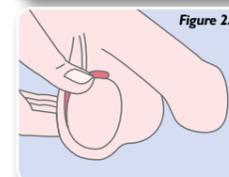
This is the easiest way to identify any potential testicular problems. It takes a few minutes to perform and gives men a good excuse for feeling their nads. It's best performed monthly after a bath or shower when the scrotum will be warm, relaxed and pleasant to touch.



1. Check each testicle separately using one, or both hands (fig.1).

2. Roll each testicle between the thumb and forefinger to check that the surface is free of lumps or bumps. **Do not squeeze!**

3. Men should get to know their balls; their size, texture, anatomy, magnificence. Identify the epididymis or sperm collecting tube, often mistaken for an abnormal lump that runs behind each testicle (fig.2).



4. Encourage a partner to have a go as they may be more likely to identify a problem and get a man to do something about it.

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### Men should:

- ▶ Perform testicular self-examination at least once a month. Men should get to know their balls and what is normal for them (one is likely to be slightly larger or hang down slightly lower). Involve a partner to make it more enjoyable.
- ▶ Get checked by a GP as soon as possible if an unusual lump in the testis is found. The likelihood is that it will not be testicular cancer (around 96% of testicular abnormalities aren't cancer) but this still needs to be ruled out. Don't delay as in rare cases some types of testicular cancer can progress quickly.
- ▶ Spending hours on a games console or computer or lazing around all day won't do their balls any favours. Take a regular break and try to get some fresh air and exercise.

For video advice on testicular self examination visit: [www.yourprivates.org.uk](http://www.yourprivates.org.uk)