

Ball Basics

A quick guide to testicular health and testicular cancer

“ Although still rare compared to other cancers, testicular cancer most commonly affects younger men aged between 15 and 45 with around 2,300 cases being diagnosed each year. ”

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



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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, winkly-bag.

The testicles

- ▶ Hang behind the penis, packed in the scrotum.
- ▶ 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 nads because sperm develop best at a temperature several degrees cooler than normal body temperature.

Testosterone

Testosterone is the male sex hormone and 90% of testosterone is made by the testicles. It is responsible for male characteristics such as:

- ▶ mood
- ▶ body and facial hair
- ▶ low voice
- ▶ the ability to have an erection
- ▶ 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 riboflavin 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.

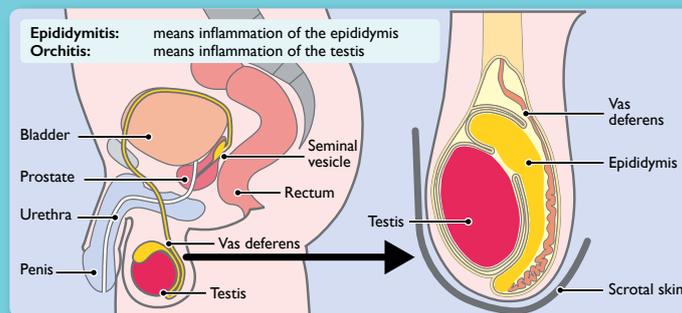
Established in 1996, Orchid works to improve the lives of people affected by male cancers through a world class research programme, educational campaigns and raising awareness and an extensive support service.

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. The testicle will feel painful and swollen and can take a few weeks to fully settle and will usually require a two week course of strong antibiotics.



For more information visit: www.yourprivates.org.uk

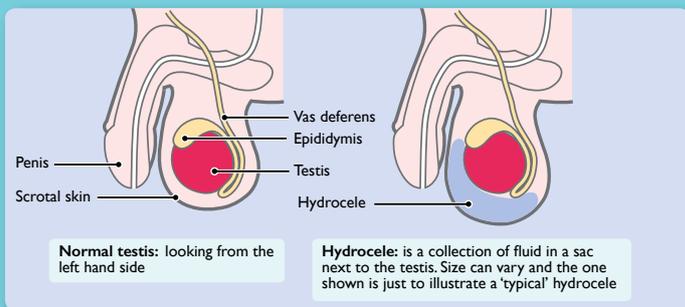
Varicocele

This is a collection of dilated veins in the scrotum. 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. If they become distended they can be felt and have been described medically 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 have been 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 the 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. A hydrocele can be treated in several ways by surgical and non-surgical means if it is causing discomfort.



For more information visit: www.yourprivates.org.uk

Epididymal cysts

These are small soft feeling structures, which may contain 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 if needed.

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!

Signs and Symptoms

- ▶ a small firm possibly painless lump attached directly to the testicle itself
- ▶ swelling pain, discomfort or enlargement and hardness 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 which may be caused by cancer affecting glands in the abdomen (lymph nodes)
- ▶ breast and nipple tenderness (gynaecomastia) associated with hormonal changes in the body caused by some types of testicular cancer. This hormone symptom may occur in approximately 5-7% of 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 chemotherapy treatment.

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

If you have any queries regarding the information contained in this quick guide please contact the Orchid Nurses by email: nurse@orchid-cancer.org.uk or phone the Orchid Male Cancer Helpline 0808 802 0010 for further information and support.

References are available on request. To be reviewed 2022.

Testicular Pain

There are several things that can cause testicular pain, for instance 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.

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

Risk factors for testicular cancer

Risk factors do not necessarily mean that a person will develop 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 scrotum).
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ Poorly functioning testicles (poor sperm production/infertility).
- ▶ There is some evidence which indicates that men who are taller than average have a slightly increased risk of testicular cancer.

Controversial

- ▶ Repeated trauma to the testicles.
- ▶ Recent research has suggested that men who smoke cannabis on a regular basis may have an increased risk of developing testicular cancer.

Testicular Self-Examination (TSE)

This is the easiest way to identify any abnormalities. It only takes a few minutes to perform and gives men a good excuse for feeling their balls. It's best performed after a bath or shower when the scrotum will be warm, relaxed and pleasant to touch. Checking on a regular basis, especially if risk factors are present, can help men identify a potential problem at an early stage.

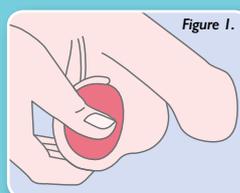


Figure 1.

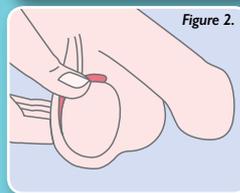


Figure 2.

1. Check each testicle separately using one, or both hands (**fig.1**) (one may be slightly larger or hang down slightly lower).
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. Identify the epididymis or sperm collecting tube that runs behind each testicle (**fig.2**).

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Men should:

- ▶ Perform testicular self-examination regularly. They should get to know their balls and what is normal for them.
- ▶ Get checked by a GP as soon as possible if something feels different or abnormal. The likelihood is that it will not be testicular cancer (around 96% of 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.

For video information on testicular self examination visit: www.yourprivates.org.uk