

Testicular Cancer

Cancer of the testicles, the male reproductive glands, affects approximately one out of every 10,000 American men aged 15 to 35, making it the most common cancer found in men in this age group and accounting for approximately three percent of all cancer deaths within the group. If discovered in the early stages, testicular cancer can be treated promptly and effectively. It is important to learn the basic facts about this type of cancer.

CAUSES

Although the cause of testicular cancer remains to be understood, the most important known risk factor involves men who have undescended or partially descended testicles. There is a simple procedure to correct the undescended testicle condition. Most men who develop testicular cancer do not have this risk factor, so it is crucial that any sudden changes be examined immediately. If there is a history of testicular cancer in your family, you should share this information with your primary care provider as soon as possible.

SYMPTOMS

The first sign of testicular cancer is usually a slight enlargement of one of the testes, as well as a change in its consistency or the development of a lump. Pain may be absent, but often there is a dull ache in the lower abdomen and groin, together with a sensation of dragging and heaviness.

TREATMENT

Surgery is often the preferred treatment option for testicular cancer. In some cases, it may be used in conjunction with radiation therapy and chemotherapy. Testicular cancer almost always occurs in only one testicle. Once the testicle is removed, sexual functioning will be provided fully by the remaining testicle.

The research for a cure for testicular cancer is moving in a positive direction. Although the five-year survival rate for all cases of testicular cancer is above 90%, the most common type of testicular cancer, seminoma, has a survival rate approaching 100% in cases that are detected and treated in the early stages of development.

Routine testicular self-exams are very important. You should always have your primary care provider examine your testicles during a routine physical examination. Your provider can talk with you about the proper method of performing the testicular self-exam.

TESTICULAR SELF-EXAM (TSE)

The best hope for early detection of testicular cancer is a simple, three-minute monthly self-examination known as the testicular self-exam or TSE. The best time to perform the TSE is after a warm bath or shower, when the scrotal skin is most relaxed.

Performing Testicular Self-Exam:

- Place your index finger and middle finger under the testicle and your thumb on top.
- Gently roll the testicle in-between your fingers and thumb. Your testicle should feel smooth to the touch.
- Examine your testicle carefully for any hard lumps or nodules.
- After completing the TSE with one testicle, do TSE on the other testicle

If you discover a lump or nodule, inform your primary care provider immediately. If you should find any lumps or nodules, do not be immediately alarmed. They may not be malignant; only a qualified health professional can make the correct diagnosis. Following a thorough physical examination and possible imaging studies, your provider will discuss with you your condition and future treatment options, if necessary.

SCHEDULING AN APPOINTMENT

Call 275-2662 to schedule an appointment at the University Health Service (UHS). UHS offers a full range of services. All visits to UHS are confidential.

LINKS

American Cancer Society
<http://www.cancer.org>

Lance Armstrong Foundation
<http://www.laf.org>