

# ASCO ANSWERS

## TESTICULAR CANCER

### WHAT IS TESTICULAR CANCER?

Testicular cancer is a disease in which cells in one or both testicles become abnormal, begin to grow uncontrollably, and form a tumor that can spread to nearby lymph nodes and other parts of the body.

Most testicular tumors develop in germ cells, which produce sperm, and are either seminoma or non-seminoma. Compared with seminoma, non-seminoma tends to grow more quickly and is more likely to spread to other parts of the body, but both types require immediate treatment.

### WHAT IS THE FUNCTION OF THE TESTICLES?

The testicles are a part of the male reproductive system. They are located under the penis in a sac-like pouch called the scrotum. The testicles produce sperm and testosterone, a hormone that plays a role in the development of the reproductive organs and other male characteristics.

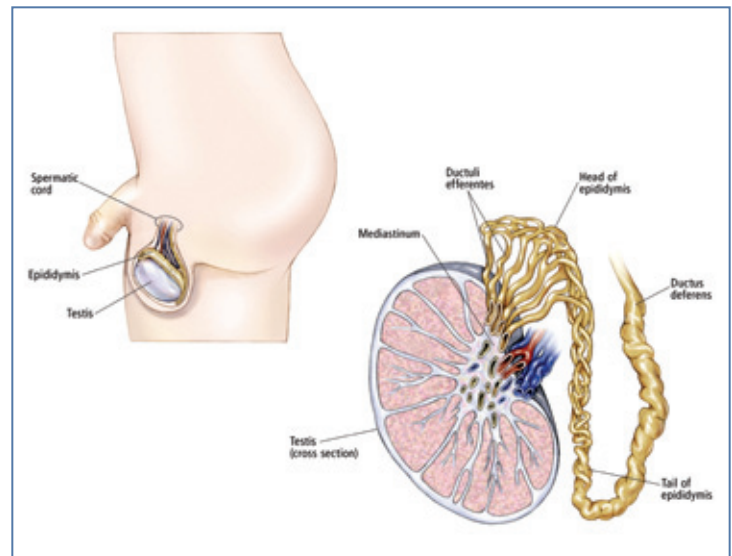


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*Find additional cancer information at [www.cancer.net](http://www.cancer.net).*

### WHAT DOES STAGE MEAN?

The stage is a way of describing the cancer, such as where it is located, if or where it has spread, and if it is affecting the functions of other organs in the body. There are three stages for testicular cancer: stages I through III (one through three) plus carcinoma in situ, a precancerous condition.

### HOW IS TESTICULAR CANCER TREATED?

The treatment of testicular cancer depends on the type of tumor (seminoma versus non-seminoma), the size and location of the tumor, whether the cancer has spread, and the man's overall health. Testicular cancer is typically curable, especially if found early. The three main treatment options are surgery, radiation therapy, and chemotherapy. Treatment usually starts with surgery to remove the affected testicle. Your doctor may then recommend active surveillance (watchful waiting) to closely monitor the cancer. Some men may also have surgery to remove lymph nodes from the back of the abdomen. Radiation therapy to the abdominal lymph nodes may be used for early-stage seminoma. Chemotherapy may be given to lower the risk of the cancer returning or to treat cancer that has spread or come back after treatment. When making treatment decisions, men may also consider a clinical trial. Talk with your doctor about all treatment options and any concerns on how your treatment may affect your sexual function and fertility. The side effects of testicular cancer treatment can often be prevented or managed with the help of your health-care team.

### HOW CAN I COPE WITH TESTICULAR CANCER?

Absorbing the news of a cancer diagnosis and communicating with your doctor are key parts of the coping process. Seeking support, becoming organized, and considering a second opinion are other steps. Take care of yourself during this time. Understanding your emotions and those of people close to you can be helpful in managing the diagnosis, treatment, and healing process.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK THE DOCTOR

Regular communication is important in making informed decisions about your health care. Consider asking the following questions of your doctors:

- What type of testicular cancer do I have?
- Can you explain my pathology report (laboratory test results) to me?
- What stage is the testicular cancer?
- Has the cancer spread to my lymph nodes or anywhere else?
- Would you explain my treatment options?
- What clinical trials are open to me?
- How will this treatment benefit me?
- How will this treatment affect my daily life? Will I be able to work, exercise, and perform my usual activities?
- How will this treatment affect my sex life?
- Will this treatment affect my ability to produce children?
- What is the expected timeline for my treatment plan?
- What long-term side effects may be associated with my cancer treatment?
- Where can I find emotional support for me and my family?
- Whom do I call for questions or problems?
- Is there anything else I should be asking?

Additional questions to ask the doctor can be found at [www.cancer.net/testicular](http://www.cancer.net/testicular).

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*ASCO believes that all treatment decisions should be made between patients and their doctors.*

**For more information, visit ASCO's patient website,  
[www.cancer.net](http://www.cancer.net), or call 888-651-3038.**

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## TERMS TO KNOW

### **Benign:**

A tumor that is not cancerous

### **Biopsy:**

Removal of a tissue sample that is then examined under a microscope to check for cancer cells

### **Chemotherapy:**

The use of drugs to destroy cancer cells

### **Lymph node:**

A tiny, bean-shaped organ that fights infection

### **Malignant:**

A tumor that is cancerous

### **Metastasis:**

The spread of cancer from where the cancer began to another part of the body

### **Oncologist:**

A doctor who specializes in treating people with cancer

### **Prognosis:**

Chance of recovery

### **Radiation therapy:**

The use of high-energy x-rays to destroy cancer cells

### **Radical inguinal orchiectomy:**

Removal of a testicle through an incision in the groin

### **Retroperitoneal lymph node dissection:**

Surgery to remove the lymph nodes at the back of the abdomen

### **Tumor:**

A mass of tissue that requires a biopsy