

ASCO ANSWERS

TESTICULAR CANCER

WHAT IS TESTICULAR CANCER?

Testicular cancer is a disease in which cells in one or both testicles become abnormal, 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. These tumors are called germ cell tumors and are divided into two types: seminomas or non-seminomas. Non-seminomas grow more quickly and are more likely to spread than seminomas, but both types need immediate treatment.

WHAT IS THE FUNCTION OF THE TESTICLES?

The testicles are a part of the male reproductive system. Each man has two testicles, and 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 male reproductive organs and other male characteristics.

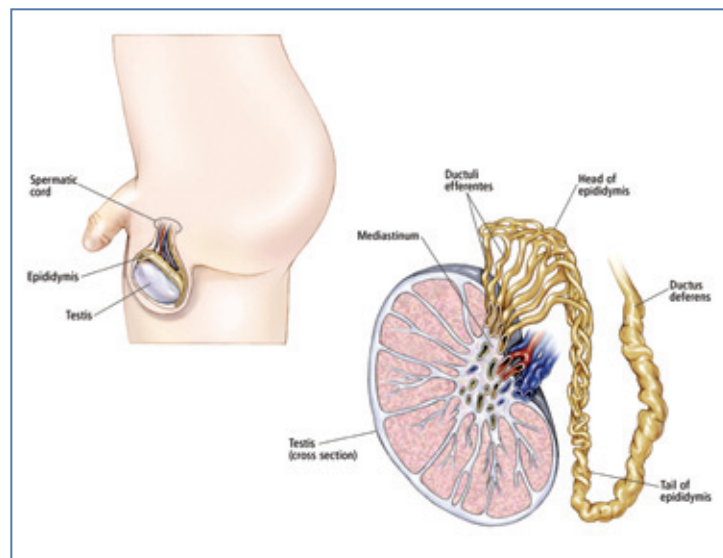


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Find additional cancer information at www.cancer.net.

WHAT DOES STAGE MEAN?

The stage is a way of describing the cancer, such as how big the tumor is, how much it has grown, and whether it has spread to the lymph nodes or other organs. There are four stages for testicular cancer: stages I through III (one through three), plus stage 0 (zero) called carcinoma in situ, a precancerous condition. Details for these stages are available at www.cancer.net/testicular.

HOW IS TESTICULAR CANCER TREATED?

The treatment of testicular cancer depends on the type of tumor (seminoma versus non-seminoma), the stage, the amount of certain substances called tumor markers in the blood, and the man's overall health. Testicular cancer is almost always curable if found early and is often curable even at later stages. The three main treatment options are surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation therapy. Treatment usually starts with surgery to remove the affected testicle. Your doctor may then recommend active surveillance (watchful waiting) to closely monitor an early-stage cancer. Some men may also have surgery to remove lymph nodes from the back of the abdomen. Chemotherapy may be given to lower the risk of the cancer returning or to treat cancer that has spread or come back after treatment. Surgery may be done after chemotherapy to remove any remaining tumors. Radiation therapy is used in specific settings for seminoma. When making treatment decisions, men may also consider a clinical trial. Talk with your doctor about all treatment options and any concerns about how your treatment may affect your sexual functioning and fertility before treatment begins. 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?
- Would you explain my treatment options? What clinical trials are open to me?
- What treatment plan do you recommend? Why?
- Who is part of my treatment team, and what does each member do?
- 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 sexual functioning?
- Will this treatment affect my ability to produce children? Should I talk with a fertility specialist about sperm banking before treatment?
- If I'm worried about managing the costs related to my cancer care, who can help me with these concerns?



Learn more about
testicular cancer

- 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?

Additional questions to ask the doctor can be found at www.cancer.net/testicular.

Cancer.Net™

Doctor-Approved Patient Information from ASCO®

For more information, visit ASCO's patient website, 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 from the back of the abdomen

Tumor:

An abnormal growth of body tissue