

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. 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, such as a deeper voice, larger muscles, and more body hair.

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 lymph nodes or other organs. There are three stages for testicular cancer: stages I through III (one through three) plus carcinoma in situ, a precancerous condition. For more detailed staging information, visit 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 of the tumor, 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 an advanced stage. 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. Surgery may be done after chemotherapy to remove any remaining tumors. 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.

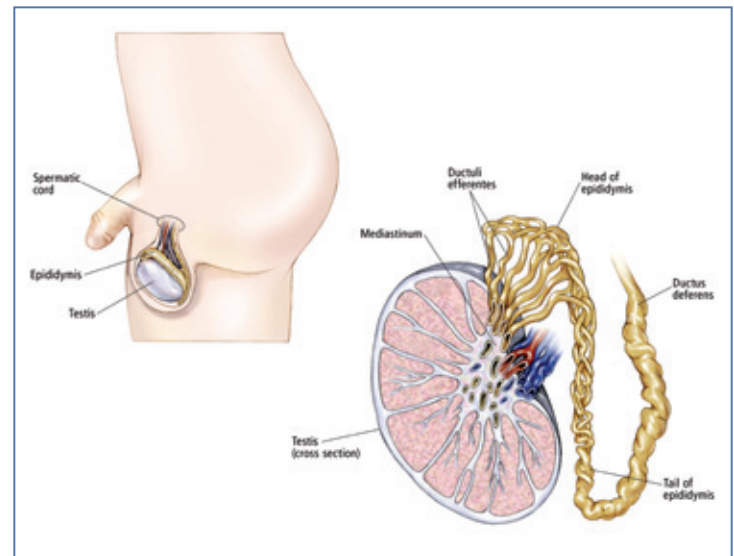


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Find additional cancer information at www.cancer.net.

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?
- If I'm worried about the cost related to my cancer care, who can help me with these concerns?
- How will this treatment affect my sex life?
- Will this treatment affect my ability to produce children?
- Should I talk with a fertility specialist about sperm banking before treatment?
- 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.

Information in ASCO's patient education materials is not intended as medical advice or as a substitute for the treating doctor's own professional judgment; nor does it imply ASCO endorsement of any product, service, or company.

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, 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