

Testicular Cancer

What is testicular cancer?

Testicular cancer begins when healthy cells in 1 or both testicles change and grow out of control, forming a tumor. Most testicular tumors develop in germ cells, which produce sperm. These tumors are called germ cell tumors and are divided into 2 types: seminoma or non-seminoma. A non-seminoma grows more quickly and is more likely to spread than a seminoma, but both types need immediate treatment.

What is the function of the testicles?

The testicles are a part of a man's reproductive system. Each man has 2 testicles, and they are located under the penis in a sac-like pouch called the scrotum. The testicles make sperm and testosterone. Testosterone is a hormone that plays a role in the development of a man's reproductive organs and other characteristics.

What does stage mean?

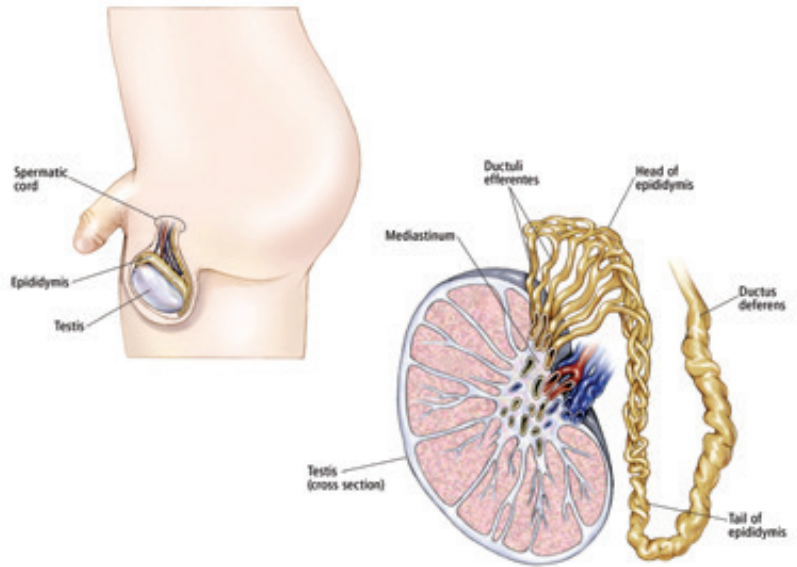
The stage is a way of describing where the cancer is located, if or where it has spread, and whether it is affecting other parts of the body. There are 4 stages for testicular cancer: stages I through III (1 through 3) plus stage 0 (zero), called carcinoma in situ, a precancerous condition. More information about these stages can be found at www.cancer.net/testicular.

How is testicular cancer treated?

The treatment of testicular cancer depends on the type of tumor (seminoma or non-seminoma), the stage, the amount of certain substances called serum 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 3 main treatment options are surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation therapy. Treatment usually starts with surgery to remove the testicle with cancer. Your doctor may then recommend surveillance to closely monitor for any return of the disease. 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 situations. 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. This is called palliative care and is an important part of the overall treatment plan.

How can I cope with testicular cancer?

Absorbing the news of a cancer diagnosis and communicating with your health care team are key parts of the coping process. Seeking support, organizing your health information, making sure all of your questions are answered, and participating in the decision-making process are other steps. Talk with your health care team about any concerns. 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 health care team:

- 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? What does this mean?
- Would you explain my treatment options?
- What clinical trials are open to me? Where are they located, and how do I find out more about them?
- What treatment plan do you recommend? Why?
- What is the goal of each treatment? Is it to eliminate the cancer, help me feel better, or both?
- Who will be 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?
- Could this treatment affect my sex life? If so, how and for how long?
- Will this treatment affect my ability to have children? Should I talk with a fertility specialist about sperm banking before treatment begins?
- What long-term side effects may be associated with my cancer treatment?
- If I'm worried about managing the costs of cancer care, who can help me?
- Where can I find emotional support for me and my family?
- Whom should I call with 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.

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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 it began to another part of the body

Oncologist:

A doctor who specializes in treating 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

Urologist:

A doctor who specializes in treating conditions of the urinary tract

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