

What to look for...

The earliest warning signs of testicular cancer usually include:

- a change in their size or shape.
- swelling or thickening of the testicles.
- a firm, smooth, painless, slow-growing lump in a testicle.
- a feeling of testicular heaviness.

Other symptoms of testicular cancer may include:

- urinary problems.
- an abdominal mass or abdominal pain.
- persistent coughing, possibly with blood-tinged sputum.
- shortness of breath.
- loss of weight or appetite
- fatigue
- lower-back pain
- tenderness in the nipples or breast enlargement.
- very rarely, infertility.

The two testicles, or testes, are glands on a man that produce his hormones and sperm. They hang behind a man's penis in the scrotum. Although Testicular cancer is rare, it is the most common type of cancer in men between the ages of 15 and 35.

Almost all testicular cancers begin in the testicles themselves rather than spread there from another organ. Testicular cancer can spread slowly or rapidly but can easily spread throughout the body to the lungs, the liver, bones, and possibly the brain.

Fortunately, most cases of this type of cancer are treatable, highly curable and are not fatal.

Causes

It is not known exactly what causes testicular cancer. Some men who develop this type of cancer have been born with an undescended testicle. Some researchers believe this type of cancer is hereditary. It is said that men with fertility problems are more likely to develop benign testicular tumours. There are other possible risk factors...

- a sedentary lifestyle
- early puberty
- previous mumps
- testicular injury
- overexposure to pesticides or radiation

It is a very good idea to go through the process of self-examination at least once per month. If you do not know what to look for, go to your doctor to have him explain to you how to examine yourself. If you do have testicular cancer, the affected testicle will be removed and analysed to see what type of cancer it is. There will also be examinations to see if the other testicle is affected.

Traditional Treatments

Because it is required for diagnosis, surgical removal of a testicle is unavoidable. If cancer is found, a second operation is performed, and these two operations are often enough to cure limited testicular cancer. Very severe cases are treated with chemotherapy as well. Nearly all testicular cancer patients are cured, but they are urged to have frequent follow-up examinations.

(See Cancer for more information on treatments such as chemotherapy and radiation.)

Prevention

Regular exercise is said to help prevent testicular cancer. Other research suggests that correcting an undescended testicle surgically before a boy turns 10 reduces the cancer risk.

Most important, however, is regular testicle self-examination.

When to seek further professional advice

- you detect any sort of unusual lump or swelling in the scrotum

