



SELF-EXAMINATION FOR EARLY DETECTION OF TESTICULAR CANCER

Introduction

Testicular cancer occurs most often in men from ages 15 to 34. If detected early enough, the condition can usually be corrected without loss of sexual or reproductive functioning. If undetected, it can be fatal.

Testicular self-examination is a simple technique, which should be used by all young men to detect possible testicular cancer. This brochure will discuss normal male anatomy, testicular cancer and the technique of testicular self-examination. You should read this information carefully. It might save your life.

What is Testicular Cancer?

Since testicular cancer is not as common as some other forms of cancer such as lung or breast cancer, most men are probably not very familiar with this disease. Any form of cancer is obviously a serious problem for its victim and family. What is particularly disturbing about testicular cancer is its likelihood of striking healthy young men in the prime of their lives. Cancer of the testis (the male reproductive gland) is one of the most common malignancies in young men. Statistics reveal that it accounts for 11 to 13 percent of all cancer deaths in the 15 to 34 years of age groups. Testicular cancer, therefore, is a subject about which every young man should be familiar.

Cancer in general may be thought of as the growth of abnormal tissue originating from any bodily organ. Testicular cancer, then, is the growth of abnormal tissue originating in the male testes. Generally, the disease begins in only one testis. As the growth

(or cancer) increases in size, it replaces and destroys the normal testicular tissue. More importantly, the cancer will ultimately spread to other vital bodily organs such as the lungs, liver, etc. It is this spreading (or metastasis) which is usually the cause of cancer deaths.

Little is known today about the exact cause of most cancers. This is essentially true for testicular cancer. Thus, there is little that can be done to prevent its development. There is, for instance, no "vaccination" which can be given to prevent the condition.

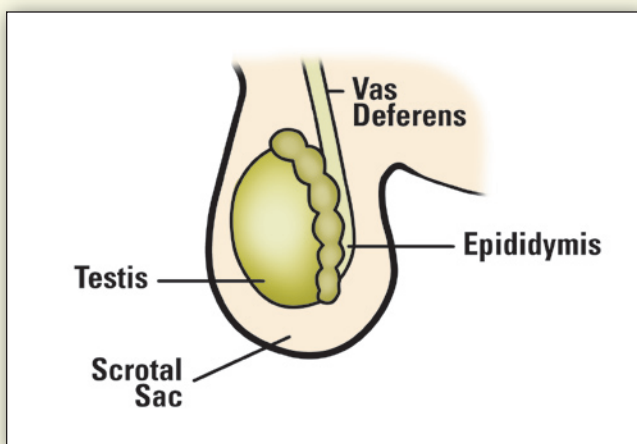
What can be done, however, is to detect these cancers early, before they have become large and have had the chance to spread throughout the body. That is why your part in testicular self-examination is so important. If a testicular cancer can be detected and treatment begins in its early stages, the chance for total eradication of the disease and cure of the cancer is increased.



Undescended Testes

Those testes, which have not “descended” normally from the abdomen into the scrotum during development, are more likely to develop cancer. Therefore, any young man who cannot feel both testes within the scrotal sac should seek immediate medical attention. Treatment for “undescended” testes is usually quite simple.

Male Anatomy and Function



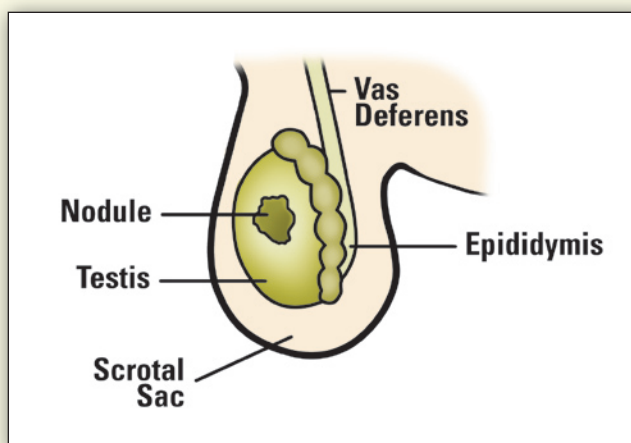
The testes are the paired reproductive glands of the male located in the scrotal sac beneath the penis. These glands have two (2) functions:

- 1.) They produce a chemical hormone called testosterone, which helps differentiate a male from a female.
- 2.) They produce the sperm, which fertilizes the female egg during the process of reproduction.

A normal “testis” is an egg-shaped structure, about the size of a walnut, with a firm, but not hard, consistency and a smooth surface. Along the back of the testis is a small, coiled tubular structure called the “epididymis”, which collects the sperm and carries it to the “vas deferens”, which in turn, transports the sperm further inside the body for eventual discharge during sexual activity.

From the standpoint of cancer detection you should be primarily interested in the testis (from which the cancers develop) and the epididymis (since this can occasionally be mistaken for a testicular growth.)

Cancer Development and Detection



Usually, the earliest sign of a testicular cancer is the presence of a small “lump” or nodule growing from the surface of one of the testes. Most often this nodule is painless, although it may produce mild discomfort at times. On occasion, the cancer will be noticed first as a general enlargement or increased firmness of the entire testis. Thus, immediate medical attention should be sought if any of these three conditions is detected:

- A discrete nodule arising from a testis.
- Generalized enlargement of a testis.
- An increase in the firmness of a testis.

Testicular Self-Examination

Testicular self-examination is the process whereby a male regularly examines his testes in an effort to detect early cancerous areas. The two-to-three minute examination should be performed monthly. It is best to perform the examination in a standing position after a warm bath or shower. At these times, the scrotal skin and surrounding muscles are most relaxed and the testes can be most easily felt.



The left and right testis should be examined individually. Simply roll each testis gently between the thumb and fingers of each hand, noting the smooth, firm testis in front and the coiled, tubular epididymis in back. At first the process may seem rather awkward; but in time it will become quite easy. Remember, what you are looking for is the presence of any testicular "lumps" or nodules... or any enlargement or increased firmness. Once again, if anything suspicious is felt, immediate medical attention should be sought.

It should be pointed out that not all abnormalities detected during self-examination represent cancer. One should not "panic" if such an abnormality is noted. On the other hand, one should never attempt to decide whether the area of concern is cancerous or non-cancerous. A physician must make this decision.



Testicular cancer is a potentially lethal disease, which strikes young men. It can be treated very effectively if discovered in its early stages. The process of testicular self-examination is simple and requires only a few minutes of a young man's time each month. That effort could save a life.