



Testicular Cancer



Basic description

Testicular cancer can develop in one or both testicles in men and boys. Contained in a sac of skin called the scrotum, the testicles are the part of the male reproductive system that produces sperm and male hormones (like testosterone). The testicles contain several types of cells, each of which may develop into one or more types of cancer. The following may be symptoms of testicular cancer:

- Lump in either testicle
- Any enlargement of a testicle
- Feeling of heaviness in the scrotum
- Dull ache in the lower abdomen or the groin
- Collection of fluid in the scrotum
- Enlargement or tenderness of the breasts (resulting from hormones produced by the cancer cells)

Opportunities

Prevention Most men with testicular cancer do not have any risk factors that could have been avoided. An undescended testicle (a testicle located in the abdomen or the groin area that does not drop into the scrotum when it is supposed to) increases the risk of testicular cancer on that side and, to a lesser degree, in the opposite normally positioned testicle as well. Surgically moving an undescended testicle into the scrotum may partially reduce that risk.

Detection In most cases, testicular cancer is detected by either a lump in a testicle or testicular swelling. Some men notice other warning signs listed above, but some testicular cancers do not cause symptoms until they have spread. Men should be aware of testicular cancer and understand that any swelling or aching should be examined by a doctor without delay. The American Cancer Society recommends a testicular exam as part of a routine cancer-related checkup.

Treatment Significant advances have been made in the treatment of testicular cancer. There are three main methods of treatment – surgery, radiation therapy, and chemotherapy. Surgery involves removal of the testicle (or testicles) containing cancer. Radiation therapy is used after surgery for some forms of testicular cancer. Most testicular cancers are very sensitive to chemotherapy, which can cure many men with testicular cancer that has spread to other parts of the body.

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Statistics

The five-year survival rate represents the percentage of patients who live at least five years after diagnosis; it does not imply that five-year survivors have been permanently cured of cancer. Localized cancer represents cancer that, at the time of diagnosis, had not spread to additional sites within the body. Typically, the earlier cancer is detected and diagnosed, the more successful the treatment, thus enhancing the survival rate.

Who is at risk?

Gender Only men are at risk.

Age Although testicular cancers usually occur in patients between the ages of 15 and 44, they can affect males of any age, including infants and elderly men.

Race White American men are about five to 10 times more likely to get testicular cancer than African American men.

Other risk factors

Medical history If a man's close family members have had this kind of cancer, he is at greater risk for developing it. Men who have had cancer in one testicle are at increased risk for developing cancer in the other testicle.

Occupational risks Some jobs, such as being a miner, oil or gas worker, janitor, leather worker, food and beverage processing worker, firefighter, or utility worker, may put men at increased risk, but more studies need to be conducted to further evaluate risk.

HIV infection There is some evidence that men infected with HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) have an increased risk of testicular cancer. This is especially true for men who have AIDS.

Quality-of-life issues

From the time of diagnosis, the quality of life for every cancer patient and survivor is affected in some way. The American Cancer Society has identified four quality-of-life factors that affect cancer patients and their families; these factors are social, psychological, physical, and spiritual.

Testicular cancer in the United States 2009 estimates

- **New cases: 8400**
- **Deaths per year: 380**
- **Five-year relative survival rate for localized stage: 99%**
- **Five-year relative survival rate for all stages combined: 95%**

Survival rates are reduced to 71% when cancer has spread to distant organs of the body, which emphasizes the need for early detection.

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The concerns that patients and survivors most often express are fear of recurrence; chronic and/or acute pain; sexual problems; fatigue; guilt for delaying screening or treatment, or for doing things that may have caused the cancer; changes in physical appearance; depression; sleep difficulties; changes in what they are able to do after treatment; and the burden on finances and loved ones. Men with testicular cancer are also usually concerned about fertility, sexual function, body image, and social relationships.

In recent years, the quality of life for those who are living with cancer has received increased attention. No one has to make the cancer journey alone. The American Cancer Society Cancer Survivors Network® is an online community for people with cancer and their families and friends. To participate, visit www.cancer.org/csn.

Emerging trends

Emerging trends in the area of testicular cancer include:

Genetics DNA mutations are now being studied to learn more about the causes of testicular cancer.

Intensive treatment Studies are under way to identify factors that help doctors predict which patients may benefit from more intensive treatments and which patients may be cured by less intensive treatments that cause fewer severe side effects.

Additional resources

To learn more about testicular cancer and the American Cancer Society's programs, please call 1-800-227-2345 (toll free) or visit our Web site at www.cancer.org.

Additional information on testicular cancer may be found at:

- **National Cancer Institute**
Cancer Information Service
Toll-free number: 1-800-4-CANCER
Web site: www.cancer.gov

- **Lance Armstrong Foundation**
Toll-free number: 1-866-235-7205
Web site: www.livestrong.org

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Bottom line

Testicular cancer is highly treatable, usually curable, and relatively uncommon. Risk factors include age, gender (male, 15 to 44), race (white men are more likely than other men to develop testicular cancer), and being born with an undescended testicle. Since none of these risks can be prevented, the best ways for a man to take care of his health are awareness of risks and symptoms, early detection, and prompt treatment.



We **save lives** and create more birthdays
by helping you stay well, helping you get well,
by finding cures, and by fighting back.

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