

Testicular cancer and testicular self-examination

This information sheet answers some common questions about testicular cancer (cancer of the testicles).

What is testicular cancer?

Testicular cancer is cancer that begins in one of the testicles. The testicles are part of the male reproductive system.

How common is testicular cancer?

Testicular cancer is uncommon. Around 154 men are affected by testicular cancer in Victoria each year.

This cancer mainly affects younger men. It is most common in men aged between 25 and 44. However, it can sometimes affect men of other ages.

Most men diagnosed with testicular cancer will be cured.

Causes

It is not known what causes testicular cancer. Certain factors put men at risk: having an undescended testicle at birth and having a father or brother who has had testicular cancer.

Symptoms

The main symptom is usually a small, hard lump or a slight enlargement or change in the density of the testes. In most cases, only one testicle is affected.

If you have a symptom, but have not been diagnosed with this cancer, remember that testicular cancer is rare, and your symptom

may be due to something else. See your doctor if you find a lump on your testicle.

Detection

A sensible approach for men and boys is to become familiar with the usual level of lumpiness of their testicles and to see their doctor if they notice a change. A good time to examine your testicles is after a warm bath or shower.

Some people need to be especially watchful. They include men and boys with a family history (father or brother) of testicular cancer, and men and boys whose testes did not descend normally when they were babies.

Treatment

Removing the affected testicle is the usual treatment. In some cases, this may be followed by chemotherapy or radiotherapy.

Early diagnosis and treatment can cure almost all cases of testicular cancer. In most cases, advanced testicular cancer (where the cancer has spread from the place where it began) can also be cured.

Your sexual function will probably not be affected if your testicle is removed. You should also remain fertile, because so much sperm is still produced by the remaining testicle.

Fertility may be affected in men who need chemotherapy, radiotherapy or more surgery. This is usually short term. However, if you wish to have children, it is very important that you discuss this with your doctor before treatment, so that you can consider sperm banking.

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For more information contact the Cancer Council Helpline on **13 11 20** (cost of a local call). This is a confidential service staffed by cancer nurses. Information is available in languages other than English.

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