

What You Need to Know Now about Testicular Cancer

Younger Men at Risk

When we hear the word cancer, most people tend to think of older people being more at risk. But when it comes to testicular cancer, younger men are the ones in the danger zone.

While it's fairly rare, testicular cancer is the most common cancer in men 15 to 34 years old. In my [Nebraska Cancer Specialists clinic at Methodist Estabrook Cancer Center](#), many of the testicular cancer patients I see are in their early 20s.

Early diagnosis and treatment

April is Testicular Cancer Awareness Month. A great time for me to remind young men of what to watch for. While men often tend to brush aside the warning signs that something may be wrong, as is the case with any cancer, the earlier you can find and treat it, the easier it is to beat. With timely diagnosis, most testicular cancer is treatable and curable.

Performing a self-exam

Testicular self-exams are the most important way to detect a tumor early. Performing routine self-exams can help you know what your body normally feels like. I recommend doing a self-exam regularly – weekly or monthly – so you can be aware when something just isn't right.

The best time to examine the testicles is right after a hot bath or shower. The scrotal skin is most relaxed at this time and the testicles can be felt more easily.

The warning signs

If you experience any of these warning signs, you should see a doctor as soon as possible.

- **Painless lump or swelling on either testicle.** This is the most common sign of testicular cancer. Found early, a tumor may feel as small as a pea or a marble, but it can grow much larger.
- **Pain or discomfort.** This pain may come with or without swelling in a testicle or the scrotum.
- **Feeling of “heaviness” or “fullness.”** There can be a change in the way a testicle feels, or one testicle may become more firm than the other. Testicular cancer may cause the testicle to grow bigger or become smaller.
- **Dull ache in the lower abdomen or groin.**
- **Sudden buildup of fluid in the scrotum.**
- **Breast tenderness or growth.** Although rare, some testicular tumors produce hormones that cause breast tenderness or growth of breast tissue, a condition called gynecomastia.
- **Lower back pain, shortness of breath, chest pain, or a bloody cough.** These can be symptoms of later-stage testicular cancer.

- **Swelling of one or both legs or shortness of breath from a blood clot.** For some men, developing a blood clot may be the first sign of testicular cancer.

Knowing your risk factors

A family history of testicular cancer can put you at greater risk for the disease, but there are a couple of risk factors men should know about.

- **Undescended testicle:** A condition known as Cryptorchidism is when a testicle does not move down properly after a male is born.
- **Congenital abnormalities of the penis, kidneys or testicles**
- **Calcifications in the testicles:** Some men develop calcified materials in their testicles, sometimes from previous infections.
- **Inguinal hernia**
- **Having had testicular cancer:** If a man has had testicular cancer, he is more likely to develop it in the other testicle, compared with a man who has never had testicular cancer.
- **Abnormal testicular development:** Rare conditions, such as Klinefelter's syndrome, where the testicles do not develop normally.
- **Mumps orchitis:** This is an uncommon complication of mumps in which one or both testicles become inflamed.

Firefighters at risk

Research has also found that men who are regularly exposed to soot and carcinogens related to burning are also at greater risk for developing testicular cancer. For example, firefighters who routinely wear fire prevention gear which is covered in soot. A 2006 study in New Hampshire shows firefighters are 102 percent more likely than an average man to get testicular cancer.

When you have questions

If you have questions or concerns about testicular cancer or any other cancer, talk with your [Methodist Physicians Clinic](#) primary care provider.