

Testicular Cancer:

What you need to know

Testicular cancer accounts for 1.2% of all cancers in males, and according to the American Cancer Society, **about one in every 263 men will develop Testicular Cancer at some point during their life.** Did you know that **33 years old** is the average age of diagnosis? Out of the approximately 10,000 new cases of testicular cancer that are predicted for 2024, six percent will affect adolescents; elderly patients contribute to another eight percent. Thus, the majority of people affected by testicular cancer include young to middle-aged men. **Testicular Cancer is the most diagnosed cancer in men 15-44.** Approximately 460 of those annual new cases will result in fatalities. Luckily, **testicular cancer is curable if detected at an earlier stage.** The best time to do a self-exam for testicular cancer is after a warm shower or bath. Gently roll each testicle between your fingers and thumbs of both hands. You should complete the simple test once a month to feel for lumps and other differences. **Early detection is the first step to successful recovery.**

10 Symptoms of Testicular Cancer:

1. Painless Lump in the Testicle

The most common symptom of testicular cancer is a lump in one or both testicles. It may start out as a small painless pea-sized spot. As the cancer cells develop and spread, the lump may change and grow, too. If you notice an unusual growth, make sure you visit your physician immediately to receive a proper medical examination and diagnosis.

2. Swelling of the Testicle or Scrotum

A noticeable swelling of the testicle is another sign of testicular cancer. Swollen testicles are abnormal, especially if you were not involved in a sports injury or related incident. Cancer in one testis (testicle) is easier to detect because of the unilateral enlargement. Make sure you monitor your symptoms and report them to your family doctor as soon as possible. He or she will request additional tests to determine the cause of the swelling.

3. Shrinking of a Testicle

Just as the testicle can swell from cancer, it can also decrease in size. Although this is less common, the shrinking of a testicle should not be neglected. Your doctor may question the size during a routine physical if you do not discover the change during a self-exam. Along with blood tests, ultrasounds and CT scans will confirm the diagnosis. Even though testicular cancer is rare, the illness is the single most common cancer among younger men.

4. Scrotal Heaviness

Male sex organs, the testes, make and store sperm. They also produce testosterone, the male hormone. The pair is located in a pouch called the scrotum, which is below the penis. It is typical for most testicular cancers to start in cells that produce sperm, also known as germ cells. There are two main types of cancerous germ cells called seminomas and non-seminomas. The latter spreads quicker and is classified in many types. Patients will often complain of a heavy feeling in the scrotum. If you experience a feeling of scrotal heaviness, it is crucial to discuss your symptoms with your medical provider.

5. Groin Ache

Because of the location of the tumor, the groin area will generally be involved in testicular cancer. A dull ache in the lower abdomen associated with minor pain may also be present. Consult with your doctor about your condition. In some cases, testicular cancer requires surgery. However, removing a testicle does not interfere with sexual encounters nor does it cause long-term sexual problems. You will still have the ability to father children as well. An operation can make these problems worse if you already suffer from pre-existing diseases. Treatments can sometimes lead to infertility, so it is critical to discuss all of your options with your physician. You can save sperm if you have any concerns.

6. A buildup of Fluid in the Scrotum

In some cases of testicular cancer, a collection of fluid known as hydrocele may form in the scrotum. A hydrocele is a buildup of clear fluids in the scrotum. It develops as a thin-walled sack but can be on one or both sides. Swelling and pain may be present, too. This condition sometimes occurs in baby boys at birth or develops later, but it usually resolves spontaneously unless it is associated with a cancerous tumor. Epididymitis is another painful condition in which the tube-like structure located in the back of the testicle becomes inflamed and swollen following a bacterial or sexually transmitted infection. Epididymitis is easily differentiated from a testicular tumor by a thorough medical examination.

7. Testicular or Scrotum Pain

As cancer progresses to a later stage, patients may suffer from discomfort or pain. Like the groin ache, this sensation can be in the testicle or scrotum, or both. It is important to note that not all aches are from testicular cancer. In fact, not all lumps found in the testicles are cancerous tumors. Testicular microlithiasis, epididymal cysts, and appendix testis are other conditions that cause pain in the related areas. Luckily, none of these ailments are cancerous. You need to make an appointment with your family doctor immediately to examine, diagnose, and treat your painful symptoms.

8. Enlargement or Tenderness of the Breasts

Affected patients may also experience enlargement (also called gynecomastia) or tenderness in the breasts. This sign may be confused with another ailment or ignored altogether with hopes it will subside on its own. If the discomfort continuous or lasts longer than a week, you should consult with your doctor about the symptoms. You should learn the necessary three-minute self-examination to monitor your body for further symptoms.

9. Lower Back Pain

As untreated testicular cancer spreads, it moves to other areas of the body. The peritoneum is the layer of thin tissue that lines the abdomen and covers organs, too, such as the bowel and liver. The peritoneum shields the organs from infections. Cancer cells can cross this barrier and invade the structures beyond the peritoneum. The spread of the disease may explain a wide spectrum of abdominal symptoms and lower back pain, as well. If you still have not been diagnosed, it may be more difficult for your doctor to pinpoint the particular ailment because lower back pain is a symptom associated with a plethora of diseases.

10. Enlarged or Swollen Lymph Nodes

As with any cancer that spreads throughout the body, the lymph nodes often become enlarged and swollen. Enlarged lymph nodes are therefore a sign of an advanced stage of cancer. Other organs may be affected by the metastasized cancer. Late-stage testicular cancer symptoms include not only swollen lymph nodes, but also a dull pain in the lower back and belly, lack of energy for no reason, shortness of breath, coughing and chest pain, headache, and confusion.