• pain or discomfort in a testicle or in the scrotum

HOW IS TESTICULAR CANCER DETECTED?

Your doctor usually examines your testicles during routine physical exams, so it’s important you have regular checkups. However, most testicular cancers are found by men themselves, since they are most familiar with the normal size and consistency of their testicles. Take three minutes out of every month to perform the following four-step self-examination.

1. First, use a mirror to look for any swelling on the scrotum. Remember that in most men the left testicle descends somewhat lower than the right testicle.

2. Since a warm environment causes the scrotal sac to descend - making it easier to find a change or lump - perform the rest of the self-examination while showering or bathing. Examine each testicle gently with both hands. Hold the testicle in the palm of one hand. Feel each half of the scrotum separately, using the thumb and forefinger of the other hand. Use a gentle rolling action to examine the entire testicle. If you notice a small lump, an enlargement of the testicle or a change in the consistency of the testicle, contact your doctor right away.

3. Next, locate the epididymis, a cordlike structure that extends behind the testicles. It stores and transports sperm. It is important to identify the epididymis, so you do not mistake it for a tumor. Normally it is shaped like a comma. It feels soft and is slightly tender when compressed.

4. The last step is to locate the spermatic cord, which also helps transport sperm. It ascends from the epididymis. You should be able to follow the spermatic cord upward along its entire course from the epididymis to the external inguinal ring. Normally, it should feel rather firm, smooth, moveable and similar to a small tube.

SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY CANCER CENTER

Our standing as an academic medical center puts it at the forefront in developing and providing the latest medical treatment and procedures for cancer patients. Our cancer services are ranked among the top hospitals by *U.S. News & World Report*. For more information on the programs available through the Saint Louis University Cancer Center, call (314) 268-5880 or toll-free 1-800-268-5880.
FACTS ABOUT TESTICULAR CANCER
Cancer of the testicle affects one out of every 10,000 American men between the ages of 15 and 35. Although this is a small number, it is still the most common cancer found in men within this age group. Testicular cancer is more common in white men than in black men, but any man, no matter what age or race, can develop it.

Fortunately, when testicular cancer is detected early, the possibility of long-term survival is high. This cancer usually occurs only in one testicle, and the other testicle is all that is needed for full sexual function or to have children.

Testicular cancer may be broadly classified into two types. Seminomas make up about 30 percent of all testicular cancers. Nonseminomas are a group of cancers that include choriocarcinoma, embryonal carcinoma, teratoma and yolk sac tumors. A testicular cancer may have a combination of both types.

This brochure is designed to give you the information you need to understand and detect testicular cancer. Let’s start by answering some basic questions.

WHAT ARE THE TESTICLES?
The testicles, sometimes called testes or gonads, are a pair of male sex glands. These smooth, oval-shaped organs are suspended below the penis in a saclike pouch called the scrotum. Their job is to produce and store sperm. They are also the body’s main source of male hormones. These hormones produce male characteristics, such as facial hair and a lower-pitched voice, and they control the development of the reproductive organs.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF TESTICULAR CANCER?
The following symptoms may be caused by testicular cancer or by other conditions. If you have any of these symptoms, it is important to see your doctor to determine their cause:

• A small, hard, painless lump, usually about the size of a pea on the front or sides of the testicle (this is the most common symptom of testicular cancer)
• Any enlargement of a testicle or a change in the way it feels
• A dull ache in the lower abdomen or groin (the area where the thigh meets the abdomen)
• A sudden collection of fluid in the scrotum

WHAT ARE THE RISKS FOR DEVELOPING TESTICULAR CANCER?
All men, especially those under age 40, have some possibility of developing testicular cancer, but some have higher risk factors. Risk factors are things that increase your chance of developing the disease. If you fall into any of the following groups, you should be aware that your risk for developing testicular cancer is increased. However, not everyone at high risk develops testicular cancer. Risk factors include:

• A testicle that has not descended into the scrotum. This is true even if surgery is performed to place the testicle in the scrotum. Testicles normally descend into the scrotal sac before birth. Parents should have their infant sons examined by a doctor to be sure the testicles have properly descended. If not, the condition may be corrected with surgery, which should be done before age three.
• Abnormal testicular development.
• Klinefelter’s syndrome, a sex chromosome disorder that may cause low levels of male hormones, sterility, breast enlargement and small testes.
• A personal history of testicular cancer, or a father or brother who has had it.
• A history of viral infections, such as mumps, in the testicles.

If you have a strong family history of testicular cancer, you may want to learn more about genetic testing and what it means for yourself and your family by contacting the genetic counseling program offered by the SLU Care Division of Hematology and Oncology at Saint Louis University Hospital. This comprehensive, confidential program can help you and your family members identify your testicular cancer risks, take steps that may help reduce the risk and undergo screenings to detect cancer in its early stages. Intensive education and counseling are important parts of the program.

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• Any enlargement of a testicle or a change in
  the way it feels
• A feeling of heaviness in the scrotum
• A dull ache in the lower abdomen or groin (the area where the thigh meets the abdomen)
• A sudden collection of fluid in the scrotum

What is the cause of testicular cancer? The cause of testicular cancer is unknown. Risk factors include:

• A testicle that has not descended into the scrotum. This is true even if surgery is performed to place the testicle in the scrotum. Testicles normally descend into the scrotal sac before birth. Parents should have their infant sons examined by a doctor to be sure the testicles have properly descended. If not, the condition may be corrected with surgery, which should be done before age three.
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