

Diagnosing Testicular Cancer

A Quick Guide

Contents

This is a brief summary of 'Diagnosing testicular cancer' from our website. You will find more detailed information on there. In this information there are sections on

- Testicular cancer tests
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- Further testicular cancer tests
- Questions for your doctor

You can view this information in a larger print on our website.

Testicular cancer tests

Usually you begin by seeing your GP who refers you to a hospital specialist for tests to see whether you have testicular cancer. At the hospital you will have:

- A physical examination of the testicle
- An ultrasound scan of your testicles and scrotum
- Blood tests to look for hormones or proteins that may be produced by testicular cancer.

Removing a testicle

If your ultrasound shows that the lump may be a cancer, your doctor may ask you to have an MRI scan. They will ask you to agree to have your testicle removed. This is called orchidectomy. A pathologist (an expert who examines and identifies cells) examines cells from the lump under a microscope to see if they are cancerous and if so, what type of cancer you have.

In this situation it is not possible to remove some tissue (a biopsy) without taking the whole testicle. Specialists think there is too high a risk of the cancer spreading with a biopsy. They will only remove a testicle when they are fairly sure there is a cancer there. The testicle would need to be removed anyway if cancer was found.

You may have the operation under a general anaesthetic or a spinal anaesthetic (where you are awake but can't feel anything from the waist down). The surgeon makes a cut in the groin and removes the testicle. The operation normally takes about 30 minutes.

You usually have this operation as a day case. Occasionally you may need to stay in hospital overnight. Your groin and scrotum may be uncomfortable for a week or so and you may need to take mild painkillers.

Remember that removing one testicle does not affect your ability to have an erection or father children.

Further testicular cancer tests

If the tests show that you have testicular cancer, you will need to have other tests to see if it has spread to any other part of your body. Doctors call this staging. Your doctor may ask you to have:

- Blood tests
- A CT scan of your chest or tummy (abdomen)
- An ultrasound scan of your abdomen
- An MRI scan

You may have other types of scan if you have symptoms that could be a sign of cancer cells in the brain or bone.

After your tests

Once you have had the tests you need, your doctor can diagnose the type of cancer, and whether the cancer has spread to any other areas of the body.

It usually takes several days for the results of your tests to be ready. Waiting for your results can be an anxious time. You may find it helpful to talk things over with a close friend or relative. You may want to contact a cancer organisation that can tell you about counselling and help you to find sources of emotional support in your area. You can also find online support forums.

What to ask your doctor about diagnosing testicular cancer

- Which tests are you going to do?
- What can each test show?
- After the tests will you know for sure whether I have cancer?
- If I have cancer will you know whether it has spread?
- How long will I have to wait before having the tests?
- Are they painful?
- How should I prepare?
- Can I go home straight after the tests are done?
- How long do the results take?
- How will you tell me about the results?
- Can you do a biopsy instead of removing my testicle?
- Can I have a false testicle (prosthesis) put in during my operation?
- What are the blood tests for?
- What did they show?
- How often will I need blood tests?
- Are you part of a multidisciplinary team (MDT) which specialises in treating testicular cancer

For more information, visit our website <http://www.cruk.org/cancerhelp>

You will find a wide range of detailed, up to date information for people affected by cancer, including a clinical trials database that you can search for trials in the UK. Our information is based on the best current scientific evidence and reviewed regularly by leading clinicians and experts in health and social care.

For answers to your questions about cancer call our Cancer Information Nurses on 0808 800 4040 9am till 5pm Monday to Friday.

Adapted from Cancer Research UK's Patient Information Website CancerHelp UK in October 2014. CancerHelp UK is not designed to provide medical advice or professional services and is intended to be for educational use only. The information provided through CancerHelp UK and our nurse team is not a substitute for professional care and should not be used for diagnosing or treating a health problem or disease. If you have, or suspect you may have, a health problem you should consult your doctor. Copyright Cancer Research UK 2014. Cancer Research UK is a registered charity in England and Wales (1089464), Scotland (SC041666) and in the Isle of Man (1103)