

Living with Testicular Cancer

A Quick Guide

Contents

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

- Coping with testicular cancer
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- Talking about testicular cancer
- Questions for your doctor
- Testicular cancer organisations

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

Coping with testicular cancer

It can be very difficult coping with a diagnosis of cancer, both practically and emotionally. You may feel very upset and confused at first.

As well as coping with the fear and anxiety that a diagnosis of cancer brings, you have to work out how to manage practically. There may be money matters to sort out. Who do you tell you have cancer? There may be children to consider. Just try to remember that you don't have to sort everything out at once. It may take some time to deal with each issue.

Do ask for help if you need it. Your doctor or specialist nurse will know who you can contact. They can put you in touch with people specially trained in supporting those with cancer. These people are there to help and want you to feel that you have support. So use them if you feel you need to.

Testicular cancer organisations can help you find sources of emotional support and counselling in your area. There are also now web based forums, like CancerChat (www.cancerchat.cancerresearchuk.org/) where you can get in touch with other people who've been diagnosed with testicular cancer. The coping with cancer section of our website contains lots of information you may find helpful. There are sections about

- Your feelings
- Telling people about your cancer
- Getting help and helping yourself
- Sex and sexuality
- Practical issues such as financial support, benefits and sick pay

Your sex life and testicular cancer

Having one testicle removed should not affect your fertility, your sexual performance or your sex drive. The remaining testicle will usually make more testosterone (the male sex hormone) and sperm to make up for the one that has been removed. But you may find you feel less like having sex until you have got over your treatment.

If you have to have both testicles removed, you will no longer produce sperm or testosterone. So you will not be able to father a child unless you have sperm banking. You will need testosterone replacement therapy to give you a normal sex drive and so that you can get an erection. You can have testosterone replacement injections every 2 to 3 weeks. Or you can wear a testosterone skin patch or use a skin gel.

Retrograde ejaculation

Having the lymph nodes at the back of the abdomen removed can cause nerve damage leading to retrograde ejaculation. This means ejaculating backwards. Your semen and sperm go back into your bladder instead of coming out of your penis. And your orgasms will feel different because they will be dry.

Protecting your partner

You cannot pass on cancer cells to your partner during sex. But you should use a condom if you are having chemotherapy in case the drugs come through in the semen. Chemotherapy or radiotherapy may damage your sperm, so it is sensible to use contraception for a while after treatment. But there is no increased risk of you fathering an abnormal baby in the future.

Fertility - having children after testicular cancer

The good news is that most men who have testicular cancer who were fertile before being diagnosed are able to father children after treatment. The biggest risk to fertility is chemotherapy but even then about 7 out of 10 men (70%) are able to father children.

Surgery

Surgery to remove the lymph glands in your abdomen can affect your fertility. The operation can cause retrograde ejaculation. Your semen and sperm go back into your bladder instead of coming out of your penis. This has no effect on your ability to have an erection or an orgasm, although your orgasms will be dry.

Chemotherapy

Chemotherapy causes temporary infertility in most men with testicular cancer. In some men fertility may not recover, particularly those who have had very high doses of chemotherapy.

Sperm banking

Because treatments may reduce fertility, your doctor will offer you the chance of sperm banking before starting treatment if you are likely to want to have children in the future.

Talking about testicular cancer

Talking about your feelings can be difficult especially if they are to do with very personal problems such as sex or worry about rejection. It might be difficult at first. But many men find that once they start to talk openly with their partners, their fears of being rejected are unjustified. You may even feel closer after talking through a problem with your partner.

Other people can also offer help and advice:

- Your doctor or nurse
- A close friend or relative
- Organisations that give help and support

Some hospitals have specially trained nurses or social workers to help with sexual problems.

What to ask your doctor about living with testicular cancer

- Who can I talk to about problems with sex and fertility?
- Can I get help for dealing with my feelings?
- Will I need to pay for counselling?
- Does the hospital offer counselling?
- What practical help can I get?
- Is there any help with money?
- How should I talk about the disease with my family and children?
- My son is worried he might get testicular cancer. What should I tell him?
- Is there research for testicular cancer at this hospital?
- Where is research for testicular cancer happening in the UK?
- What progress is being made?

Testicular cancer organisations

Cancer Research UK

Website: www.cruk.org/cancerhelp

Cancer Information Nurses phone: 0808 800 4040

Orchid Cancer Appeal

Website: <http://www.orchid-cancer.org.uk>

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)

