Testicular self examination
Testicular self-examination (TSE) only takes a minute and can help detect abnormalities. Being familiar with the look, feel and shape of your testicles will help you notice any changes early. See your doctor for prompt diagnosis of any testicular lumps or swellings.

Performing regular testicular self-examination (TSE) can help you to become familiar with the usual feel of your testicles so that you can recognise any changes, if they occur. All men should check their testicles regularly.

Around 200 Victorian men are diagnosed with testicular cancer every year, most commonly between the age of 20 and 50. This rare cancer has a high cure rate and is more easily treated in its earlier stages.

If you recognise changes in your testicles, see a doctor as soon as possible. It is a good idea to perform TSE even if you have had testicular cancer or are currently being treated for it, because cancer may develop in the other testicle.

Risks of testicular cancer

Men who had undescended testicles at birth, or who are infertile, are at greater risk of testicular cancer. If you belong to either of these groups, be vigilant and regularly examine your testicles for unusual lumps or swellings.

Checking your testicles using testicular self-examination

Testicular self-examination only takes a minute. Aim to perform TSE about once every four weeks or so. Choose a day that’s easy to remember, like the first day of every calendar month.

If you have been treated for testicular cancer, still examine your remaining testicle because you have a one in 25 chance of developing cancer in this testicle also. See your doctor for further information or instruction on TSE, and for prompt diagnosis of any testicular lumps or swellings.

Testicle anatomy

The anatomy of the testicle includes:

- **Testicle (or testis)** – small, oval-shaped sex gland that produces sex hormones and sperm
- **Epididymis** – a series of small tubes attached to the back of the testicle that collect and store sperm. The epididymis connects to a larger tube called the vas deferens
- **Scrotum** – the skin sac that houses the testicles. Sperm production needs a temperature around 2°C lower than the body, which is why the testicles are located outside the body in the scrotum.

What to expect when performing testicular self-examination

Become familiar with the look, feel and shape of your testicles; this will help you notice any abnormalities.

The characteristics of healthy testicles include:

- Each testicle feels like a smooth, firm egg.
- Adult testicles range in size from about 15 mL (similar to a bird egg) to 35 mL (similar to a small chicken egg).
- One testicle may be slightly larger than the other.
- Commonly, one testicle hangs lower than the other.
- There should be no pain or discomfort when the testicles and scrotum are handled gently.

How to perform testicular self-examination

Generally, the TSE procedure includes:

- Make sure your scrotum is warm and relaxed. You may like to perform TSE after showering or bathing.
- It may help to do TSE in front of the mirror, so you can see as well as feel what you’re doing.
- Check one testicle first, then the other.
- Gently roll one testicle using the fingers and thumbs of both hands.
- Feel along the underside of the scrotum to find the epididymis that sits at the back of the testicle. It should feel like a little bunch of tightly curled tubes.
- Perform TSE on the other testicle.

TSE shouldn’t be painful or uncomfortable. If one or both testes have become tender or painful, see your doctor.
Symptoms of testicular cancer and testicular self-examination

Symptoms of testicular cancer include a testicular lump that is usually painless (about one in 10 are painful), a sensation of heaviness in the scrotum, and a persistent ache in the affected testicle.

Take notice of anything unusual, such as:

- a lump or swelling in or on the testicle itself
- change in testicular size
- change in testicular shape
- change in the consistency or feel of the testicle.

Testicular conditions other than cancer

It’s important to remember that testicular cancer is relatively uncommon, so don’t panic if you find a lump or anything else that seems unusual. See your doctor for a prompt diagnosis.

Some non-cancerous conditions that may affect the testicles include:

- cyst – an abnormal but harmless collection of fluid
- varicocele – varicose veins. About 10 to 15 per cent of men have varicose veins of the scrotum
- haematocele – a blood clot caused by trauma or injury to the testicles or scrotum
- epididymo-orchitis – infection of the epididymis, testicle or both that causes inflammation and pain. Treatment is usually antibiotics
- testicular torsion – the cord that attaches the testicle to the body twists and cuts off the blood supply. This extremely painful condition needs urgent medical attention
- undescended testicles – either one or both testicles are missing from the scrotum and are lodged instead inside the lower abdomen. Premature and low-weight newborn boys are most prone to undescended testicles. This condition is known to increase the chance of testicular cancer later in life and is also linked to infertility.

Where to get help

- Your GP (doctor)
- Andrology Australia Tel. 1300 303 878

References

- Testicular cancer, 2018, Andrology Australia.

Send us your feedback

1/4 How would you rate this website?

- Excellent
- Good
- Average
- Fair
- Poor

Send us your feedback

Please note that we cannot answer personal medical queries. If you are looking for health or medical advice we recommend that you:

- talk to your doctor or pharmacist
- dial triple zero (000) in an emergency
- ring NURSE-ON-CALL Tel. 1300 60 60 24.

2/4 Your Comments

Tell us who you are [Select an option]

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Male reproductive system explained

- Health checks for men
  - Men should see their doctor for regular medical check-ups.
- Men's health
  - A lack of health awareness and an unwillingness to adopt a healthier lifestyle puts men at a health disadvantage.
- Men's health checks (video)
  - Many men put off going to the doctor, including nutritionist, Shane Bilshourough.
- Puberty
  - Adjusting to the many changes that happen around puberty can be difficult for both parents and young people.
- Reproductive system
  - New life begins when a male sex cell (sperm) fertilises a female egg (ovum) within the female reproductive system.
Safe sex
Safe sex is sexual contact that doesn't involve the exchange of semen, vaginal fluids or blood between partners.

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
It is not difficult to avoid catching sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Fertility and contraception

- Assisted reproductive technology – IVF and ICSI
  IVF (in-vitro-fertilization) and ICSI (intracytoplasmic sperm injection) are assisted reproductive treatment (ART) procedures in which fertilisation of an egg occurs outside the body.

- Contraception - choices
  The method of contraception you choose will depend on your general health, lifestyle and relationships.

- Contraception - condoms for men
  Condoms are the most effective way to reduce your risk of contracting a sexually transmissible infection (STI) during sex.

- Contraception - injections for men
  Contraceptive injections for men are not yet available in Australia, but clinical studies suggest that they may provide a safe, effective and reversible method of male contraception in the future.

- Contraception - vasectomy
  Having a vasectomy does not affect a man’s ability to produce male sex hormones, enjoy sex or reach orgasm.

Infertility in men
A couple isn't suspected of fertility problems until they have tried and failed to conceive for one year.

Klinefelter syndrome
Klinefelter syndrome is often diagnosed at puberty, when the expected physical changes don't occur.

Penis

- Cosmetic genital surgery - labiaplasty and phalloplasty
  Cosmetic genital surgery involves reshaping the labia, vulva or penis to alter their size or shape.

- Diabetes and erectile dysfunction
  Men with diabetes are more prone to problems with erectile dysfunction or impotence.

- Erectile dysfunction
  Common causes of erectile dysfunction include physical illness, anxiety and too much alcohol.

- Foreskin care
  Regular cleaning under the foreskin is essential to prevent infection.

- Male Circumcision
  Male circumcision involves the surgical removal of the foreskin of the penis.

- Peyronie's disease
  Peyronie's disease causes abnormal fibrous lumps that make an erect penis curve.

- Premature ejaculation
  Premature ejaculation is only a problem if it happens frequently.

Prostate

- Non-specific urethritis (NSU)
  Non-specific urethritis (NSU) means any inflammation of a man's urethra that is not caused by gonorrhoea.

- Prostate cancer
  Prostate cancer can be treated in a variety of ways, so discuss treatment options with your doctor.

- Prostate cancer - androgen deprivation therapy

betterhealth.vic.gov.au
One of the treatments for prostate cancer is androgen deprivation therapy (previously called hormone therapy).

- **Prostate cancer testing**
  Men with a family history of prostate cancer, or men who have had a raised test result in the past, will benefit most from regular testing.

- **Prostatectomy for cancer**
  The aim of a radical prostatectomy is to remove the cancer before it spreads to other parts of the body.

- **Prostate disease**
  The prostate gland produces fluids that protect and feed sperm cells.

- **Prostate gland and urinary problems**
  Many men experience urinary changes as they age, which may be caused by inflammation or enlargement of the prostate gland.

- **Transurethral resection of the prostate (TURP) - for benign prostate disease**
  Surgery on the prostate gland can have many side effects, including erectile problems and urinary incontinence.

### Testicles

- **Androgen deficiency in men**
  The effects of androgen deficiency depend on how severe the deficiency is, its cause and the age at which the deficiency begins.

- **Contraception - vasectomy**
  Having a vasectomy does not affect a man's ability to produce male sex hormones, enjoy sex or reach orgasm.

- **Epididymitis**
  Epididymitis is an infection that causes inflammation of the epididymis.

- **Infertility in men**
  A couple isn't suspected of fertility problems until they have tried and failed to conceive for one year.

- **Klinefelter syndrome**
  Klinefelter syndrome is often diagnosed at puberty, when the expected physical changes don't occur.

- **Testicular cancer**
  Early diagnosis and treatment can cure almost all cases of testicular cancer.

- **Testicular self examination**
  Men with an increased risk of testicular cancer should regularly examine their testicles for unusual lumps or swellings.

- **Undescended testicles**
  Undescended testicles means that one or both testicles are missing from the scrotum.

### Hormones and men

- **Ambiguous genitalia**
  The causes of ambiguous genitalia include genetic variations, hormonal imbalances and malformations of the fetal tissues that are supposed to evolve into genitals.

- **Androgen deficiency in men**
  The effects of androgen deficiency depend on how severe the deficiency is, its cause and the age at which the deficiency begins.

- **Infertility in men**
  A couple isn't suspected of fertility problems until they have tried and failed to conceive for one year.

- **Prostate cancer - androgen deprivation therapy**
  One of the treatments for prostate cancer is androgen deprivation therapy (previously called hormone therapy).

- **Reproductive system**
  New life begins when a male sex cell (sperm) fertilises a female egg (ovum) within the female reproductive system.

### Related Information
Body mass index calculator for children and teenagers

This calculator measures body mass index (BMI), which is a measure of body fat. It is only an approximate measure of the best weight for your health. The calculator can be used for anyone from two to...

Testicle injuries and conditions

If you injure your testicles, always seek urgent medical advice...

Undescended testicles

Undescended testicles means that one or both testicles are missing from the scrotum...

Testicular cancer

Early diagnosis and treatment can cure almost all cases of testicular cancer...

Breast awareness

Women should become familiar with the normal look, feel and shape of their breasts, so they will notice any abnormal changes...

Related information on other websites

- Healthy Male – Testicular self-examination
- The Cancer Council Victoria

Content Partner

This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by: Healthy Male (Andrology Australia)

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