

Testicular cancer

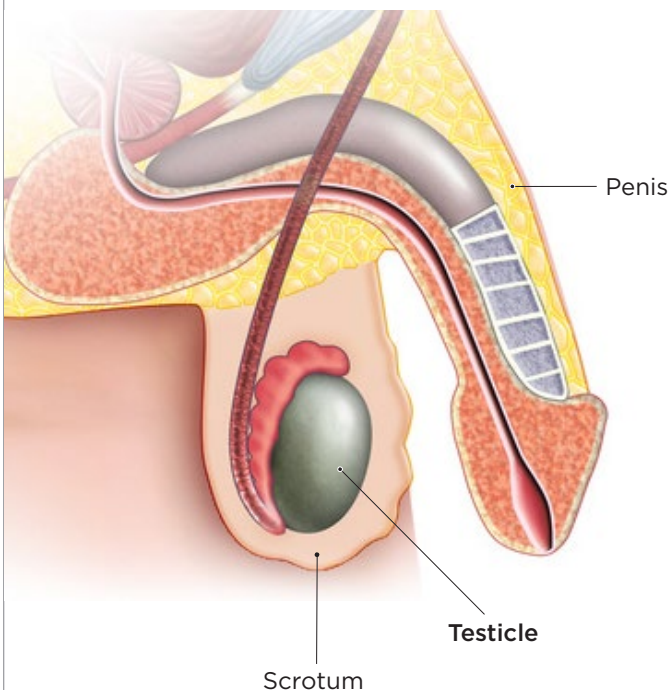


You've just learned that you have testicular cancer. Here is some information you need to know to understand the disease and possible treatments.

What are the testicles?

The testicles are 2 glands covered by a sac of skin called the scrotum that hangs below the penis. The glands produce sperm and testosterone, the hormone that's responsible for male sexual characteristics: facial hair, deep voice, hairiness, muscle mass, etc.

Position of the testicles



What is testicular cancer?

Testicular cancer occurs when abnormal cells multiply uncontrollably in a testicle. This forms a mass called a "tumour." It can cause damage to the testicle.

There are 2 categories of tumours with types of treatment and follow-up that may also be different:

- > seminoma
- > non-seminoma

In nearly all cases, tumours come from the **germ cells** that produce sperm. The **non-germ cells** form the structure of the testicles and produce testosterone.

Cancer cells may leave the tumour and travel through the blood or the lymph. When they reach other organs, they may create new tumours called "metastases."

Who is most likely to be affected by this cancer?

Mainly men between the ages of 15 and 35.

Testicular cancer has the highest survival rate of any men's cancer, over 90%.

What causes testicular cancer?

There is no single cause. The leading risk factors are having:

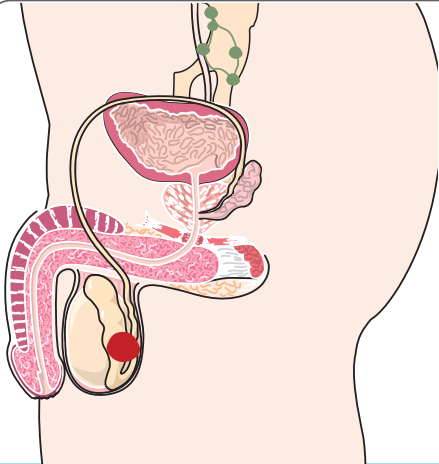
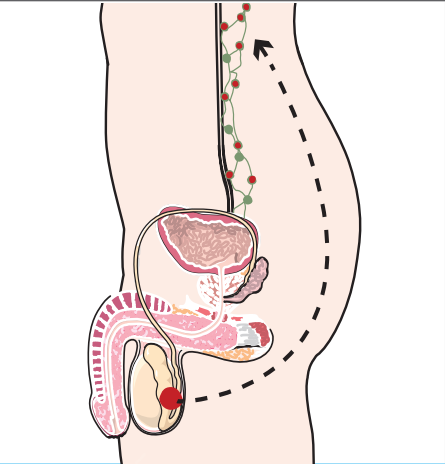
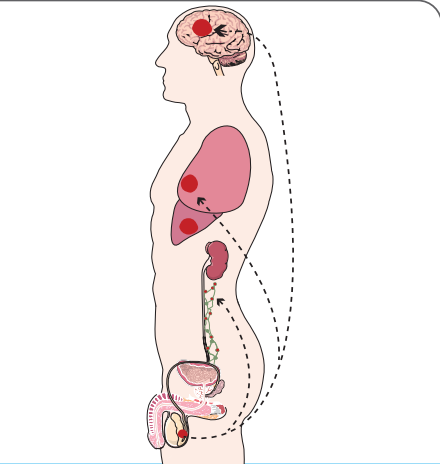
- an undescended testicle at birth
- some abnormal development of the testicles
- testicular cancer in the past
- a family member with this cancer

What are the stages in testicular cancer?

The system used to describe the stages is called TNM and S, which stands for Tumour Node Metastasis and Serum markers.

- **T:** size of the **tumour** in the testicle.
- **N:** presence of **tumours** in the lymph nodes (small organs that filter the blood).
- **M:** presence of **metastases** in other organs (lungs, liver, bones, etc.).
- **S:** quantity of tumour **markers** in the blood. These markers are substances produced by cancer cells.

Here are the 3 stages of testicular cancer

		
Stage I	Stage II	Stage III
<p>The cancer is contained within one testicle. Tumour markers are normal.</p>	<p>The cancer cells have spread behind the intestines (retroperitoneal) to some extent. Tumour markers may be normal or high.</p>	<p>The cancer has spread to distant lymph nodes. There are metastases. Tumour markers are often quite high.</p>

How will the decision be made about my treatments?

It depends on the stage of the cancer and your own preferences. Several doctors from various specialties may meet to discuss your case. Your doctor will explain the possible treatments and their advantages and disadvantages to you. You will be involved in the final choice.



Your treatments could leave you unable to father children. But it is possible to store sperm for later use. Talk to your care team.

What are the possible treatments?

Various treatments may be used in combination:

- > **Testicle removal (inguinal orchiectomy).** This operation involves removing the whole affected testicle and part of the cord attached to it. It's performed through an incision above the groin fold. With this procedure, the testicle can be examined to see what type of cancer it is. This is first stage in the treatment.
- Active surveillance.** After a testicle is removed, the patient is closely monitored for signs that the illness may be progressing.
- > **Removing some lymph nodes** behind the intestines. This operation, which is called "retroperitoneal lymph node dissection," may be performed if the cancer has spread, and depending on the type of tumour. An incision in the belly is required.
 - > **Chemotherapy.** This involves injecting medication into your veins to destroy cancer cells.

- > **Radiation therapy.** This treatment sends radiation to the tumour to shrink or totally destroy it. This procedure is only appropriate for seminoma-type cancers.



- > **Stem cell transplant from the bone marrow (hematopoietic system).** This treatment replaces bone marrow damaged in high-dose chemotherapy. This type of chemo is used to treat highly aggressive tumours.
- > **Clinical trials or research protocols.** These are ways of trying out new medications or treatments and evaluating their effectiveness and safety.
- > **Complementary therapies.** Yoga, tai chi, meditation and visualization can improve your sense of well-being and reduce your stress. However, they are not cures for cancer.

Parallel treatments

Some people opt to treat cancer with medicinal plants, high doses of vitamins or strict diets. Before you consider this type of treatment, talk to a member of your care team. Some of these options can have harmful effects on your other treatments.

What is the follow-up procedure?

You will have several check-ups.

- > **A physical examination.** Your doctor will perform a complete examination, including:
 - palpating the other testicle
 - palpating the neck, armpits and abdomen looking for swollen lymph nodes



- > **Blood tests.** To follow up on your general state of health and your tumour markers
- > **Imaging tests,** for example:
 - an X-ray or scan (tomodensitometry) of your lungs
 - an abdominal scan

Where should I go for help or answers to my questions?

If you have questions about your treatments and follow-up, feel free to contact any member of your care team.

Finding out that you have cancer can affect morale. Support is available to help you live with your new situation.

A psychologist, social worker, sexologist and psychiatrist are available to you as members of your care team. Feel free to request their services.



USEFUL RESOURCES

Canadian Cancer Society:

> **1 888 939-3333**

What is testicular cancer?

> **action.cancer.ca**

Quebec Cancer Foundation:

> **1 800 363-0063**

> **fqc.qc.ca**

Testicular Cancer Canada:

> **testicularcancer.ngo**

Other health sheets published by the CHUM are available. Ask for those that might fit your situation.



You can also find them on our website

chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante

The content of this document in no way replaces the recommendations and diagnoses made, or the treatment suggested by your health professional.

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