

Testicular cancer

What is testicular cancer?

Cancer that develops in a testicle is called testicular cancer. Usually, only one testicle is affected but in a few cases both testicles are affected.

Types of testicular cancer

Most testicular cancers start in the cells that make sperm, called germ cells.

The two main types of testicular cancer are seminoma and non-seminoma. They may also be called germ cell tumours.

Seminoma – This is the most common type, usually occurring in men aged between 25 and 50 years.

Non-seminoma – This is more common in younger men, usually in their 20s. Non-seminoma is made up of other types of testicular cancer generally grouped together, including:

- choriocarcinoma
- embryonal carcinoma
- teratoma
- yolk sac tumour.

Sometimes a testicular cancer can be a mixture of seminoma and non-seminoma or a combination of the different types of non-seminoma.

What causes testicular cancer?

The causes of testicular cancer are unknown.

Certain factors that may increase a man's chance of developing testicular cancer.

Undescended testicle:

Before birth, the testicles develop inside the baby's abdomen. After birth or within the first year of life, the testicles usually move down (descend) into the scrotum. If the testicles don't descend, an operation to bring them down is performed. Having the operation reduces the risk of developing testicular cancer, but the risk is still higher than men who were born with a descended testicle.

Family history:

Men with a father or brother who has had testicular cancer are slightly more at risk. There is no known link between testicular cancer and injury to the testicles, sporting strains, hot baths or wearing tight clothes.

How common is it?

Testicular cancer is a rare type of cancer. In 2003 in Tasmania, about 17 men were diagnosed with the disease.

Testicular cancer is the second most common cancer in young men aged 18 to 39. It may develop in younger or older men, but this is uncommon.

For more detailed information consult the booklet *Understanding testicular cancer* on www.cancertas.org.au/pages/healthprof_patient.php

Call The Cancer Council Helpline 13 11 20