

Testicular Cancer

The Testicles

The testicles (also called the testes), both slightly smaller than a golf ball, are a part of the male reproductive system. The testicles are contained in a sac of skin called the scrotum, which hangs beneath the penis. (See Figure 1)

The testicles produce the male hormones, one of which is testosterone. These hormones control the development of the reproductive organs and male characteristics. The testicles also produce and store sperm, the male reproductive cells.

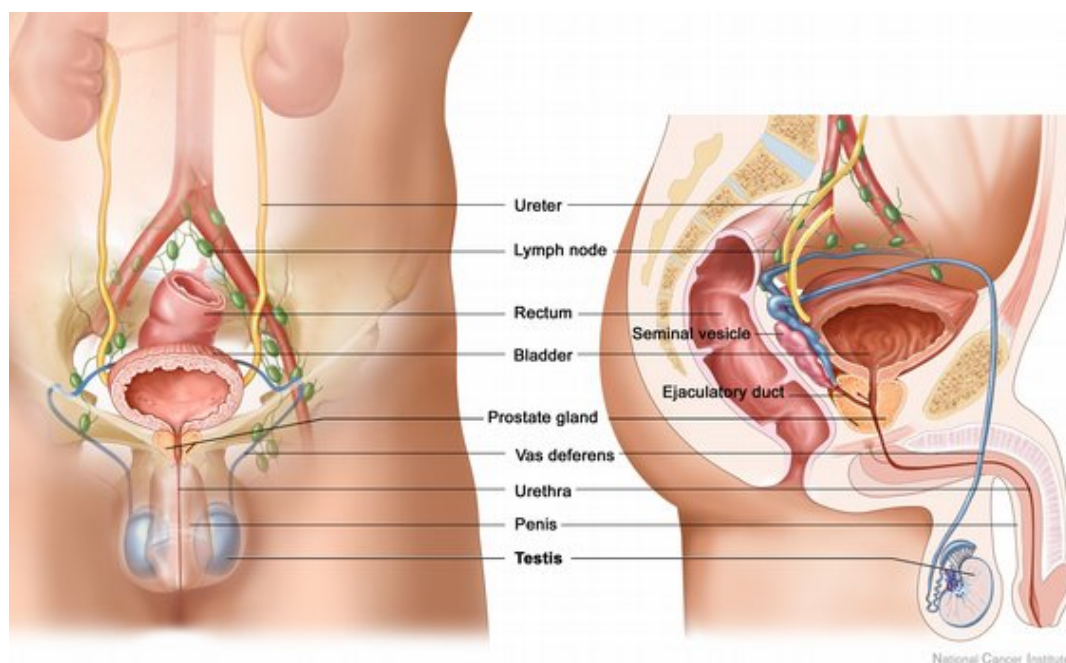


Figure 1.
Male reproductive system

About Cancer

Cancer is a group of many different diseases that have some important things in common. Cancer affects cells, the body's basic unit of life. Normally, cells grow and divide to produce more cells only when the body needs them. This orderly process helps keep the body healthy.

Sometimes cells keep dividing when the new cells are not needed. These cells form a mass of extra tissue, called a growth or tumor. Tumors can be benign or malignant.

- Benign tumors are not cancer. They often can be removed and in most cases, they do not come back. Most important, benign tumors are rarely a threat to life.
- Malignant tumors are cancer. Malignant tumor cells are abnormal and divide without control or order. These cancer cells can invade and destroy the tissues around them. Cancer cells can break away from a malignant tumor and enter the bloodstream or the lymphatic system. This process is the way cancer spreads from the original (primary) tumor to form new tumors in other parts of the body.

Testicular Cancer

Testicular cancer is a disease in which malignant (cancer) cells form in the tissues of one or both testicles. The testicles contain several types of cells, each of which may develop into one or more types of cancer. It is important to distinguish these types of cancers from one another because they differ in their prognosis and in the ways they are treated. If detected early, testicular cancer is a highly treatable and usually curable form of cancer. Testicular cancer is the most common cancer in men 20 to 35 years old.

Your doctor will choose your treatment based on the type of testicular cancer you have, as well as on the stage of your disease. Your doctor will discuss your treatment options with you.