

Testicular Self-Exam

The Testicles

The testicles are the male sex glands and are slightly smaller than a golf ball. See image 1. They are located behind the penis in a pouch of skin called the scrotum. The testicles produce male hormones and produce and store sperm.

The testicular self-exam (TSE) is a way for males to check their own testicles for any unusual growths, lumps, swelling, or pain which may be the first sign of testicular cancer. Although rare, testicular cancer is most commonly found in males between the ages of 15 and 35. If detected early, testicular cancer is highly treatable and usually curable.

Swelling, lumps, or pain can be caused by:

- Injuries
- Irritation and swelling (inflammation)
- Infection
- Extra fluids around the testicle (hydrocele)
- Twisted testicles (testicular torsion)
- Cancer of the testicle (testicular cancer).
 - You may be at risk of testicular cancer if you have:
 - A testicle that has not descended.
 - Previously had cancer of the testicle.
 - A family history of cancer of the testicle.



The testicles and surrounding organs
©MD Anderson Cancer Center

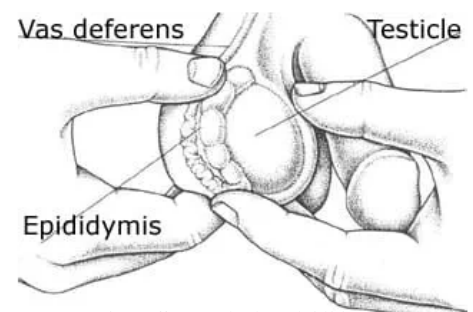
Image 1

General Self-Exam Tips

- It is easiest to do a self-exam during or immediately after a warm bath or shower. This is when the scrotum is most relaxed making the exam easier. Testicles are harder to examine when you are cold.
- Normal testicles are egg-shaped and feel smooth and firm. They should not feel tender.
- It is normal to feel a firm cord that feels like spaghetti at the back of your testicles. This is called the spermatic cord.
- Do a self-exam once a month so you are more likely to notice changes in size, shape, or tenderness.

How to Perform a Self-Exam

1. Stand and hold your penis away from your body. Examine one testicle at a time.
2. Look at each testicle to check for changes in how it looks. Look for swelling or changes in size or shape.
3. Roll each testicle between your thumb and finger.



<https://www.cincinnatichildrens.org>

4. Feel the whole testicle for:
 - a. Lumps
 - b. Swelling
 - c. Discomfort
5. Check for swelling or tender bumps in the groin area. Your groin is where your lower belly (abdomen) meets your upper thighs.

When to Contact a Doctor

- You find a bump or lump. This may be a small, hard bump that is the size of a pea.
- You have swelling, pain, or soreness in your testicle area.
- You see or feel any other changes in your testicles.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you may have with your health care provider.

Adapted from Testicular Cancer. The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center ©2003. Revised 01/2021, Patient Education. BMDA Reviewed 5/30/2025.