

The testicular self-exam— 30 seconds that can save your life

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Everyone has heard about how important it is for women to examine their breasts regularly for signs of cancer, but not many people are aware of an equally important exam that men should be doing every month—testicular self-examination (TSE). The

purpose of TSE is to detect early signs of cancer of the testes, the egg-shaped organs that produce sperm and male hormones.

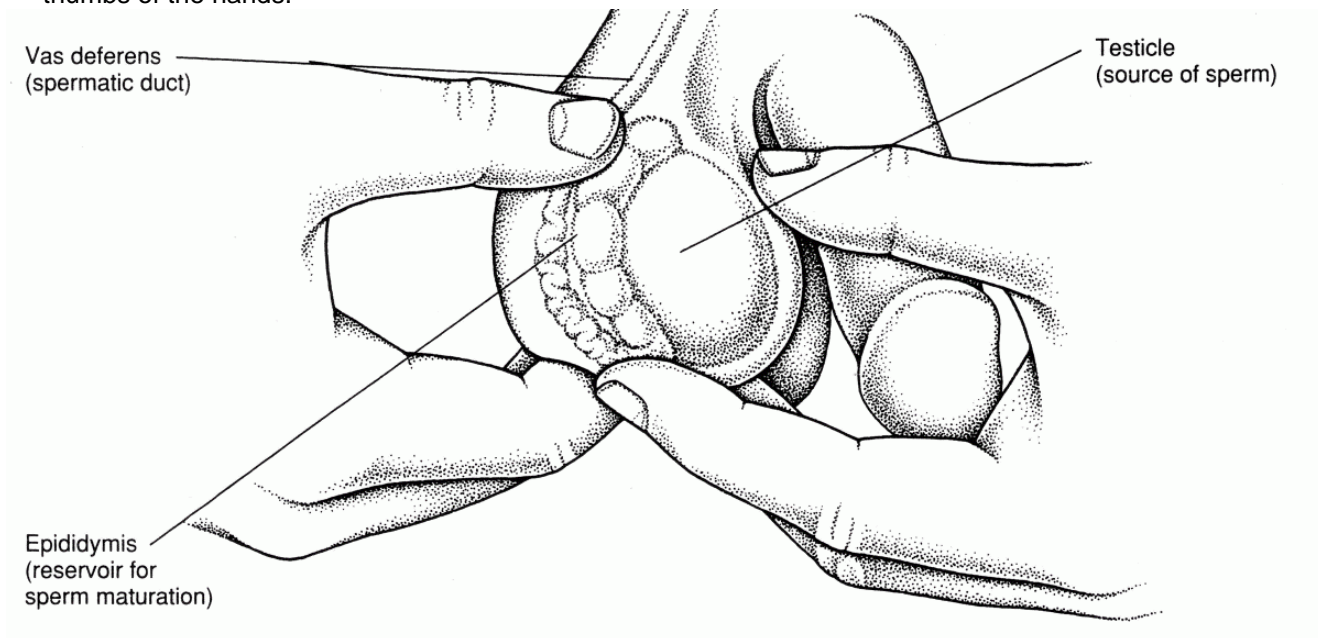
You don't have to be an expert to understand why every man over 20 should perform a monthly TSE.

Testicular cancer—the most common form of cancer in men between the ages of 20 and 40—can be completely cured if it's detected early and treated promptly but can be deadly if it's not.

HOW DO I PERFORM THE EXAM?

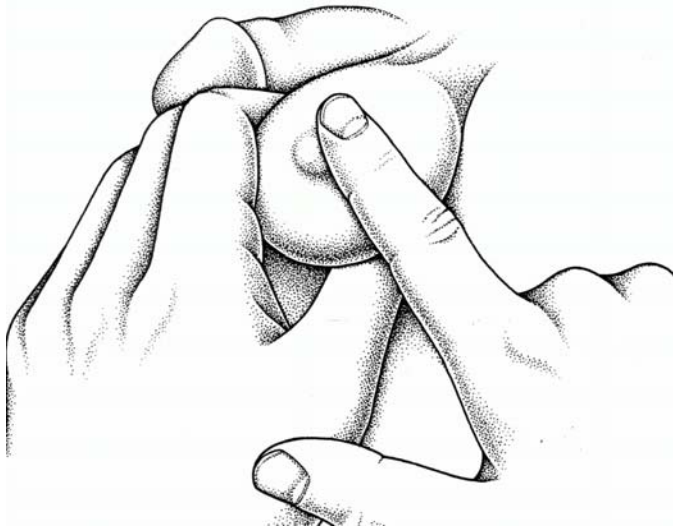
Follow these simple steps for a thorough TSE:

- Examine one testicle at a time, repeating the process described here.
- Use both hands to examine each testicle.
- Hold the testicle between the fingers and thumbs of the hands.
- Roll the testicle between the thumbs and fingers with a gentle pressure that causes no pain or discomfort
- Examine both testicles regularly, at least once a month.



WHAT AM I LOOKING FOR?

Normal testicles usually feel smooth and spongy. What you are trying to feel is any pea-sized lumps or other irregularities at the front and sides of the testicles. Learn to recognize the ropelike, tubular feel of the epididymis, a naturally occurring structure running from top to bottom along the back of each testicle, so that you don't confuse it with an abnormal growth.



If you can feel a hard lump on the front or side of one of the testicles or if you feel any pain or discomfort when performing the exam, contact your doctor right away so he or she can check what you have found. Don't put it off!

Are some men more at risk for testicular cancer than others?

Yes. Although its causes are not completely understood, research has shown that the risk for developing testicular cancer is greater in men whose testicles did not descend from the body into the scrotum by the time they were born

or shortly thereafter. Testicles that do not descend into the saclike scrotum within this period can sometimes be brought into position with medication, although surgery is usually necessary. If this surgery is done before a boy enters puberty, his risk of later developing testicular cancer is greatly reduced.

When should I do the TSE?

Perform the TSE at least once every month. The exam is easy to carry out and works best if you do it during or after a shower, when the skin of the scrotum is smooth and relaxed and it's easy to feel the testicles.

Testicular cancer can be cured completely if it's detected early and treated promptly but can be deadly if it's not.

Does every lump in a testicle mean cancer?

Not all lumps are cancerous. Chances are you are quite healthy or have a condition that can readily be treated. But remember, if cancerous growth is indeed present, any delay in detection and treatment gives it time to spread to other parts of your body, at which point it is much more difficult to treat successfully than it would have been earlier.

So be sure to perform the TSE regularly, and see your doctor if you have any questions about this or any other aspect of your health.

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