

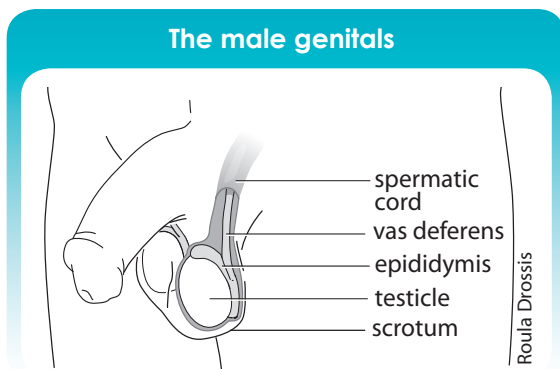


Scrotal swellings

Swellings or lumps in your scrotum may cause you discomfort but they rarely cause serious health problems. There is effective treatment if you need it.

What is the scrotum?

- The **scrotum** is the “bag” of skin that holds and protects the testicles. (See diagram: *The male genitals*)
- The testicles make sperm and male hormones (such as testosterone).
- The sperm moves from the testicles into the epididymis.
- The epididymis holds the sperm so that they can mature.
- Mature sperm fertilize a female egg.
- Sperm flows up and out from the vas deferens when you ejaculate.
- The **spermatic cord** contains the vas deferens, blood vessels, nerves, and muscles.
- All the parts of the scrotum are wrapped in many layers of tissue and muscle.



What are scrotal swellings?

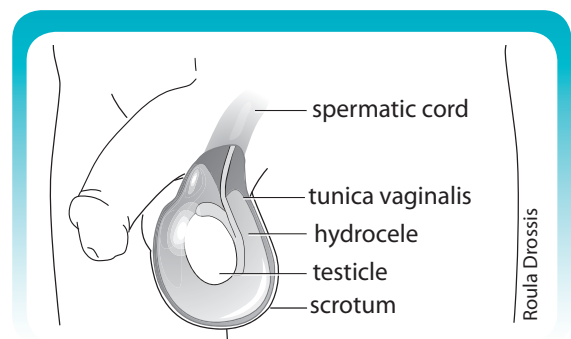
- Most of the lumps and swellings found in the scrotum are not because of cancer.
- Cancer of a testicle does not happen very often and usually in younger men.
- Cancer often shows as a solid lump in the testicle itself.
- Physical examination and an ultrasound when necessary can easily identify the nature of any swelling in the scrotum.

- Most often, a scrotal swelling is due to:
 - A watery fluid that has collected (such as a hydrocele or cyst)
 - Or “bulging” (dilated) blood vessels (a varicocele).

HYDROCELE

What happens during hydrocele repair in men?

- Hydrocele repair is an out-patient procedure. (See diagram below)
- To prevent pain, the repair is done:
 - Under general anesthetic (you are “put to sleep”)
 - Or spinal anesthetic (local “freezing”)
- There is a cut (incision) made in the front of the scrotum.
- The hydrocele is then opened, drained, and fixed so that the fluid cannot come back.
- You can go back to your usual activities in a few weeks.



What should I know about the side effects from a hydrocele repair?

- It is important to get medical help at once if you have problems like infection or hematoma.
- If a hydrocele comes back (not very often), you will need more treatment.

Comparing three types of scrotal swellings in men

(Additional information under headings below table)

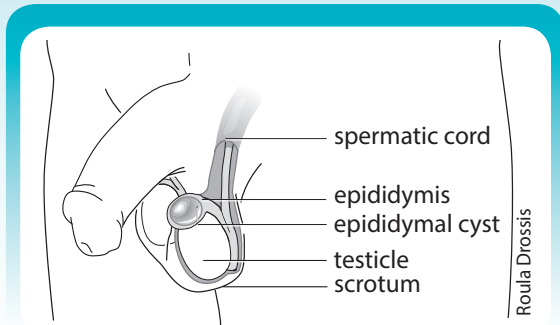
	Hydrocele	Epididymal cysts or spermatoceles	Varicocele (up to 15% of men)
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A watery fluid that may collect in tissue around the testicle and spermatic cord 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cysts have thin walls Cysts collect a watery fluid in the epididymis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unusually large veins inside your spermatic cord Vary in size from "hard-to-see" to very large
Causes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often no clear cause May be caused by infection, inflammation, or injury 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often no clear cause May be caused by injury or infection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Valves in the veins not working so that blood collects
Symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With larger hydroceles, a feeling of heaviness or pressure in the scrotum Discomfort possible (tight clothing or sitting for a long time) Embarrassment from size 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often very few symptoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often no symptoms Bulging and widening of veins (left side or both) Size may vary from "hard-to-see" to very large May look like a "bag of worms" Aching or heaviness (from physical activity or standing for a long time) Often disappear when lying down
Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smaller ones are not treated Aspiration (draining it) Sclerotherapy 	Usually, treatment not needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usually not treated unless a lot of discomfort Varicocelectomy (tying off veins) Embolization (re-routing flow of blood)
Surgery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hydrocele repair (larger hydroceles that bother you) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible for larger or uncomfortable cysts (similar to a hydrocele repair) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sometimes done to allow testicle to grow (especially in teens) For fertility problems
Possible side effects from surgery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not affect fertility (getting your partner pregnant) Bruising, some swelling Infection, hematoma (build-up of blood) Important to distinguish from a hernia (a weakness in the groin) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May affect fertility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usually works well Scrotal swelling Testicle shrinking Possible infection, bleeding Hydrocele may form Injury to the spermatic cord

Continued on next page

EPIDIDYMAL CYSTS

What happens during surgery for an epididymal cyst in men?

- When you have surgery for an epididymal cyst, your doctor will make a small cut (incision) in your scrotum over top of the cyst. (See *diagram below*)
- The cyst is carefully removed from nearby tissue.
- To close the epididymis and the incision, your doctor will use stitches that will disappear on their own (called dissolvable stitches).



VARICOCELE

How is a varicocele treated?

- There are a number of ways to repair a varicocele.
- Tying off veins (**varicocelectomy**) that “feed” blood to the varicocele:
 - Is an out-patient process
 - Usually uses a general anesthetic (puts you to “sleep”) for pain.
 - Makes a small cut (incision) in your groin or lower abdomen
 - Uncovers the dilated veins and ties them off
- Another method is called **embolization** which:
 - Is usually carried out in a hospital under light sedation.
 - Is performed by a specialist using x-rays
 - Pushes a small tube gently through the groin to put a small plug into the vein
 - This plug stops blood from flowing to the vein.

What do I need to know after a varicocele is treated?

- Sometimes dilated veins do come back after a time.
- With a varicocele repair, there can be problems like infection, bleeding, and the growth of a hydrocele.
- If the spermatic cord is injured, it can cause: (**See all diagrams**)
 - Blocking of the vas deferens, even though this is very rare
 - Shrinking of the testicle (called **atrophy**).
- Scrotal swellings happen often but they do not always mean there are serious health problems.
- If necessary, minor surgery can correct scrotal swellings.

WHAT IS A HYDROCELE IN A BOY?

- A hydrocele may be found in a newborn boy.
- Towards the end of pregnancy, each testicle in the baby drops from the abdomen into the scrotum alongside a channel through the groin.
- This channel normally closes before or shortly after birth.
- When the channel stays open, fluid can run from the abdominal cavity into the scrotum (called **communicating hydrocele**).
 - The size of the hydrocele can change because fluid moves back and forth from the abdomen to the scrotum
 - Often before age one, the communicating channel will close by itself
 - The hydrocele may disappear
- A large hydrocele is not usually painful but may be tense and make the scrotum look bluish.

How is a hydrocele in a boy treated?

May be repaired if:	Repairing the hydrocele:	Small risks from surgery may include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It causes symptoms• Is still there after one year of age	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is an out-patient surgery• Is done under general anesthesia• Is done with a cut (incision) in the groin• Closes the connecting channel• Can also repair any hernia at the same time	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bleeding• Bruising• Infection• Injury to the spermatic cord

This publication is produced by

Canadian **U**rological Association
*The Voice of Urology in **Canada***



Association des **U**rologues du Canada
*La voix de l'urologie au **Canada***

The information in the publication is not intended to convey medical advice or to substitute for direct consultation with a qualified medical practitioner. The Canadian Urological Association disclaims all liability and legal responsibility howsoever caused, including negligence, for the information contained in or referenced by this brochure.

© 2023. Canadian Urological Association. All rights reserved.

cua.org