

Men's health: testicular and prostate cancer

Testicular cancer is the most common cancer among young men between the ages of 20 and 39.

Testicular cancer has risen by 70% over the past twenty years and as many as one man in every five hundred will develop this disease in the UK. Prevention is much better than cure and being able to detect any signs of male health problems at an early stage is the answer.

Testicular cancer

Know your risks

There are several risk factors that increase the risk of development of testicular cancer and these include:

- Being a Caucasian man aged between 20 and 39 (www.cancerhelp.org.uk Oct 2008).
- A previous diagnosis of testicular cancer increases the risk of developing a subsequent testicular cancer by around 12-fold.
- Undescended testes (Cryptorchism) is one of a range of testicular abnormalities known to increase the risk of testicular cancer. Cryptorchism is associated with a two- to four-fold increased risk of

testicular cancer, with a higher risk if both testes are undescended. Having the testicle re-positioned in hospital before the age of 10 may reduce this excess risk, but men who have had their testicle re-positioned are still at slightly increased risk.

- Inherited genetic factors play a role in a small percentage of testicular cancer patients.
- Increased consumption of dietary fat, particularly milk and cheese, has been linked to testicular cancer incidence.

Testicular cancers are curable in the great majority of cases. Curative treatment varies by type of tumour and the stage of disease at diagnosis.

Symptoms

Any of the following symptoms may indicate the early onset of testicular cancer:

- A painless lump in either testicle
- Any enlargement of a testicle
- An increase in testicular firmness
- A feeling of heaviness in the scrotum
- A dull ache in the abdomen or groin
- A sudden collection of fluid in

the scrotum

- Enlargement or tenderness of the breasts.

Self-examination

Most lumps found on the testicles are benign but any change in size, shape or weight should be checked by your GP.

These personal self-examination steps should be carried out frequently and preferably after a warm bath or shower as the scrotal skin relaxes:

- Support scrotum in the palm of your hand and be familiar with the size and weight of each testicle.
- Examine each testicle by rolling it between your fingers and thumb. Press gently to feel for lumps, swelling and firmness.
- Each testicle has an epididymis at the top, which carries sperm to the penis. Feel for it gently – it's a normal part of your testicle.

Many men do not know how to examine themselves and so the disease is able to spread before any symptoms appear. Treatment for testicular cancer is usually very successful and most men can now be completely cured, even if the cancer has spread beyond the testicles.

Prostate cancer

Know your risks

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men and it represents one quarter of all new cases of cancers diagnosed in men. Over the last 30 years, prostate cancer rates in Great Britain have tripled with around 60% of prostate cancer cases being diagnosed in men aged over 70 years. One of the highest rates of prostate cancer is found in the UK.

Each year around 10,000 men in the UK die from prostate cancer. However, prostate cancer death rates have not changed significantly in the last ten years, unlike the incidence, which has increased.

Symptoms

In the early stages of prostate cancer there are often no symptoms. But when symptoms do occur, any of the following symptoms may apply:

- Difficulty in urinating including problems with stopping and starting
- A weak stream of urine
- Urinating more often than usual – especially at night
- Blood in the urine
- Pain and stiffness in the lower back and hips.

If you suffer from any of these symptoms, it is important you see your GP as soon as possible, so that the necessary tests can be carried out. Around 7 in 10 newly diagnosed prostate cancer patients now survive beyond five years. So early detection and treatment is essential to increase your chances of a healthy life.

A diagnosis of prostate cancer is not necessarily life threatening and curative treatment may not be necessary. Most men who are diagnosed with early prostate cancer can expect to have a slow growing cancer which should not cause any problems during their natural life span. Remember – early detection can prevent unnecessary worry.

Need more information?

Cancer Research UK

www.cancerresearchuk.org.uk

Men's Health Forum

www.menshealthforum.org.uk