

Living with Testicular Cancer - A Quick Guide



Contents

This is a brief summary of the information on 'Living with testicular cancer' from CancerHelp UK. You will find more detailed information on the website.

In this information there are sections on

- Coping with testicular cancer
- Your sex life and testicular cancer
- Fertility – having children after testicular cancer
- Talking about testicular cancer
- A positive approach to testicular cancer
- Helping yourself
- Questions for your doctor
- Testicular cancer organisations

Coping with testicular cancer

It can be very difficult coping with a diagnosis of cancer, both practically and emotionally. You may feel very upset and confused at first.

As well as coping with the fear and anxiety that a diagnosis of cancer brings, you have to work out how to manage practically. There may be money matters to sort out. Who do you tell you have cancer? There may be children to consider. Just try to remember that you do not have to sort everything out at once. It may take some

time to deal with each issue. Do ask for help if you need it though. It is likely that your doctor or specialist nurse will know who you can contact to get some help – they can put you in touch with people specially trained in supporting those with cancer. These people are there to help and want you to feel that you have support. So use them if you feel you need to.

Testicular cancer organisations can help you find sources of emotional support and counselling in your area. There are also now web-based forums where you can get in touch with other people who've been diagnosed with testicular cancer. The 'coping with cancer' section of CancerHelp UK contains lots of information you may find helpful. There are sections about your feelings, on telling people about your cancer, on getting help and helping yourself, sex and sexuality, and on practical issues like financial support, benefits and sick pay.

Your sex life and testicular cancer

Having one testicle removed should not affect your fertility, your sexual performance or your sex drive. The remaining testicle will usually make more testosterone (the male sex hormone) and sperm to make up for the one that has been removed. But



you may find you feel less like having sex until you have got over your treatment.

If you have to have both testicles removed, you will no longer produce sperm or testosterone. So you will not be able to father a child unless you have sperm banking. You will need testosterone replacement therapy to give you a normal sex drive and so that you can get an erection. You can have testosterone replacement injections every 2 to 3 weeks. Or you can wear a testosterone skin patch.

Retrograde ejaculation

Having the lymph nodes at the back of the abdomen removed can cause nerve damage leading to retrograde ejaculation. This means ejaculating backwards. Your semen and sperm go back into your bladder instead of coming out of your penis. And your orgasms will feel different because they will be dry.

Protecting your partner

You cannot pass on cancer cells to your partner during sex. But you should use a condom if you are having chemotherapy in case the drugs come through in the semen. Chemotherapy or radiotherapy may damage your sperm, so it is sensible to use contraception for a while after treatment. But there is no increased risk of you fathering an abnormal baby in the future.

Fertility – having children after testicular cancer

The good news is that the vast majority of men who were fertile before being diagnosed are able to father children after having treatment for testicular cancer. The biggest risk to fertility is chemotherapy, but even then about 7 out of 10 (70%) are able to father children.

Surgery

Having the lymph glands in your abdomen taken out by surgery can affect your fertility. The operation can cause retrograde ejaculation. Your semen and sperm go back into your bladder instead of coming out of your penis. This has no effect on your ability to have an erection or an orgasm, although your orgasms will be dry.

Chemotherapy

Chemotherapy causes temporary infertility in most men with testicular cancer. In some men fertility may not recover, particularly those who have had very high doses of chemotherapy.

You may be offered the opportunity of sperm banking before starting treatment if you are concerned about your future fertility. Discuss the possibility of sperm banking with your doctor before your treatment starts.

Talking about testicular cancer

Talking about your feelings can be difficult especially if they are to do with very personal problems such as sex or worry about rejection. It might be difficult at first, but many men find that once they have found the courage to talk openly with their partners, their fears of being rejected have little basis in reality. You may even feel closer after talking through a problem with your partner.

Others can also offer help and advice

- Your doctor or nurse
- A close friend or relative
- Organisations that give help and support



Some hospitals have specially trained nurses or social workers to help with sexual problems.

Notes

What to ask your doctor about living with testicular cancer

- Who can I talk to about problems with sex and fertility?
- Can I get help for dealing with my feelings?
- Will I need to pay for counselling?
- Does the hospital offer counselling?
- What practical help can I get?
- Is there any help with money?
- How should I talk about the disease with my family and children?
- My son is worried he might get testicular cancer. What should I tell him?
- Is there research for testicular cancer at this hospital?
- Where is research for testicular cancer happening in the UK?
- What progress is being made?

More information

For more information about testicular cancer, visit our website <http://cancerhelp.cancerresearchuk.org>

You will find a wide range of detailed, up to date information for people affected by cancer, including a clinical trials database that you can search for cancer trials in the UK. You can view or print the information in a larger size if you need to.

For answers to your questions about cancer call our Cancer Information Nurses on **0808 800 4040** 9am till 5pm Monday to Friday

Adapted from Cancer Research UK's Patient Information Website CancerHelp UK in July 2011. CancerHelp UK is not designed to provide medical advice or professional services and is intended to be for educational use only. The information provided through CancerHelp UK and our nurse team is not a substitute for professional care and should not be used for diagnosing or treating a health problem or disease. If you have, or suspect you may have, a health problem you should consult your doctor. © Cancer Research UK 2011. Cancer Research UK is a registered charity in England and Wales (1089464) and in Scotland (SC041666).