

## WELLNESS UPDATE 2003, #2

### TESTICULAR CANCER

**While testicular cancer can occur in any male, it occurs more frequently in white males, ages 15-40 years, than in any other race or age group.** The exact causes of most cases of testicular cancer are unknown. It is suspected that certain changes in the chromosomes and DNA may be responsible for changing normal cells into cancer cells.

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#### RISK FACTORS

While the exact cause of testicular cancer is unknown, there are several risk factors associated with it that young men should be aware of.

- **An undescended testicle, a partially descended testicle, or a testicle that descended after the age of six**
- Men with a **family member who developed testicular cancer** are at higher risk
- **White males, ages 15-40**
- **Possible exposure to certain chemicals** used by miners, oil & gas workers, leather workers, food & beverage processing workers, janitors, and utility workers

NOTE: There is no convincing evidence that injury to the testicles increases the risk of cancer, but occasionally someone has his testicles examined following an injury and an existing tumor is found.

#### SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Many people are unaware that testicular cancer exists, and many who are aware of its existence do not know how to detect it. **When detected in the early stages, testicular cancer is nearly 100 percent curable.**

- The most common warning sign is a **painless lump** about the size of a pea, often found on the front or side of the testicle
- A **slight enlargement of one testicle**
- A **change in the consistency of the testicle**
- A **dull ache in the groin and lower abdomen area**

- A sensation of heaviness in the testicle
- Pain or discomfort in a testicle or scrotum
- Collection of fluid in the scrotum

**If one, or more, of these signs and symptoms is experienced it is important to have an examination by a physician for proper diagnosis and treatment.**

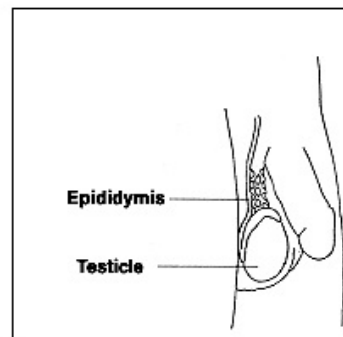
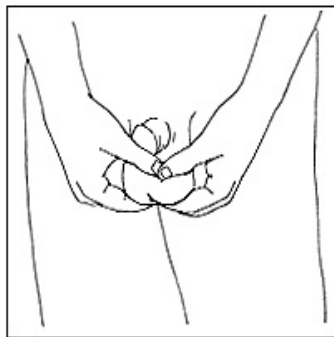
**PREVENTION/SELF EXAMINATION**

Because most testicular cancers cannot be prevented, self examination is extremely important to detect possible cancerous changes in the very early stages. **The best chance of finding cancer early requires men to examine their testicles monthly.**

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Here's how to perform this simple exam:

- The **best time to perform the exam** is after a warm bath or shower.



- Observe the testicles by standing in front of a mirror and **looking for any swelling. Examine each testicle** with both hands. Gently grasp the testicle between the thumbs and index fingers. Roll it between your fingers applying a small amount of pressure trying to detect any irregularities of the surface or texture of the testis. **Most lumps will be approximately the size of a pea and painless.** It may be perfectly normal for one testicle to be slightly larger than the other, **as long as neither testicle has changed in size.**
- **Find the epididymis at the upper, rear portion of each testicle.** Become familiar with what it feels like so as not to confuse it with a lump.
- Near the groin region higher in the scrotum is the vas deferens and associated blood vessels that supply the testicles. The vas deferens can be felt as a small, firm tube.
- After one testicle and cord have been examined, one can then examine the opposite side. Comparing the two testicles can help establish an abnormality in one side or the other.

**Fortunately most scrotal or testicular masses are not cancerous, but if one feels an abnormality in size, shape or texture of a testicle, a consultation with a physician should be made as soon as possible.**

**Questions and comments regarding testicular cancer or any other area of student-athlete wellness are welcomed and encouraged. They should be directed to Alan Beste, ATC, Administrative Assistant for the Iowa High School Athletic Association, PO Box 10, Boone, IA 50036. (515)432-2011, <abeste@iahsaa.org>**

**SOURCES:** American Cancer Society, For Men Only: Testicular Cancer and How to do TSE, May 1996; American Cancer Society, Testicular Cancer Fact Sheet, May 1996; American Cancer Society web site <www.cancer.org>, various articles; Dr. Edwin J. McClendon and Nancy L. Johnson, Health and Wellness, Laidlaw Brothers, River Forest, Illinois, 1987, p. 249; H. Winter Griffith, M.D., Complete Guide to Symptoms, Illness, and Surgery, The Body Press, Los Angeles, CA, 1987, p. 561; Holly Ann Williams, R.N., "Screening for Testicular Cancer," Pediatric Nursing, September/October, 1981, pp. 38-40; National Cancer Institute web site <rex.nci.nih.gov/WTNK\_PUBS/testicular.htm>, various articles; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Testicular Self-Examination, January 1990; University of Maryland Medicine web site <www.umm.edu/cancer/overview/testicular.html