

## Checking in on “The Boys”

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Testicular cancer is a rare form of cancer that begins in the cells of a testicle- part of the male’s reproductive system, located in the scrotum. Most testicular cancers start in the germ cells (the cells that produce immature sperm).

There are two main types of germ cell tumours – seminomas and non-seminomas. Each type grows differently and is treated differently. Both types can be treated successfully if detected early on.

### Causes

It is not known what causes testicular cancer but some factors seem to increase the risk of developing it:

- delayed descent of the testicles (if not corrected early)
- abnormal development of the testicle
- age – highest incidence in males between 15 and 49
- family or personal history of testicular cancer

**NB: Some men develop testicular cancer without any of these risk factors.**

### Self Assessment

All men, from the time they are 15 years old, should perform testicular self-examination (TSE) regularly. **Early detection of testicular cancer can make a difference in the treatment of the disease.**

### How to check your testicles

The best time to check your testicles is just after you’ve had a bath or shower, when the muscles in the scrotum are relaxed, making it easier for you to feel any lumps, growths or tenderness:

1. Stand in front of the mirror. Look for any swelling on the skin of your scrotum. You should not feel any pain when checking you testicles.
2. Hold your scrotum in your hands so that you can feel the size and weight of each testicle. It is common for one testicle to be slightly larger and it may also hang lower than the other.
3. Feel each testicle and roll it between your thumb and finger. It should feel smooth. You’ll feel a soft, tender tube towards the back of each testicle. This is normal.

After you’ve become familiar with how your scrotum feels, you’ll know when there are any changes. Also make sure, when you have your regular medical checkup with your doctor, a testicular exam is included.

### **Changes to look out for**

Testicular cancer may not always create a noticeable lump on your testicle. Look out for:

- a hard lump – like a small pea – on the front or along the sides of either testicle
- Any change in size, shape, tenderness or sensation of your testicles or scrotum
- A change in the consistency or swelling of your testicles or scrotum
- Pain in your testicles or scrotum
- A dull ache or heaviness in your lower abdomen
- Abnormal and persistent backache
- Unexplained weight loss

**Go to your doctor immediately if you notice any of these changes. Having these signs and symptoms does not necessarily mean that you have testicular cancer. They could be caused by other problems, so see your doctor to be sure.**

### **Treatments**

Testicular cancer can be cured in most men, even if it has spread.

Treatments include:

- Surgery
- Radiation therapy
- Chemotherapy

### **REFERENCES**

- <http://www.cancer.ca>
- [www.mayoclinic.com](http://www.mayoclinic.com)