

How to Perform a Testicular Self-Exam

While rare, testicular cancer is the most common form of cancer in men between the ages of 15 and 35. It is a highly treatable cancer especially if caught and treated early. With early detection, treatments are more effective and often less aggressive than when the cancer is detected in the later stages.

Most often testicular cancer is detected as a painless lump in one of the testicles. Testicular cancers are often found by men themselves or their partner, which is why it is so important to be familiar with what is “normal” for your testicles. By performing monthly testicular self-exams, you can become more familiar with your testicles and make it easier to notice any changes.

It is best to perform a testicular self-exam during or right after a warm shower or bath, which helps relax the skin of the scrotum. Don't be alarmed if one testicle seems slightly larger than the other, or if one testicle hangs lower than the other—that's normal.

You should also be aware that each testicle has a small, coiled tube called the epididymis that can feel like a small bump on the upper or middle outer side of the testis. Normal testicles also contain blood vessels, supporting tissues, and tubes that carry sperm. Some men may confuse these with abnormal lumps at first. If you have any concerns, ask your healthcare provider.

Perform a testicular self-exam:

1. **Stand in front of a mirror (if possible) and check for any swelling on the scrotal skin.**
2. **Examine each testicle with both hands. Hold your testicle between your thumbs and middle fingers and roll it gently but firmly between your fingers.**
3. **Look and feel for any hard lumps or nodules (smooth rounded masses) or any change in the size, shape, or consistency of your testicles.**
4. **You should not feel any pain when performing the self-exam. Be aware of any dull soreness or heaviness. The testicles should be smooth and firm to the touch.**

Note: A testicle can get larger for many reasons other than cancer. For example, fluid can collect around the testicle to form a hydrocele. Or the veins in the testicle can dilate and cause enlargement and lumpiness around the testicle. If your testicle seems larger, have a healthcare provider examine you to be sure you have one of these conditions and not a tumor.

If you see or feel something new or unusual, contact your healthcare provider right away.



Source: Testicular Cancer Society (testicularcancersociety.org), American Cancer Society (cancer.org)