WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT
TESTICULAR CANCER
THE MOVEMBER FOUNDATION IS A GLOBAL CHARITY COMMITTED TO MEN LIVING HAPPIER, HEALTHIER AND LONGER LIVES.

THE FOUNDATION IS ADDRESSING FOUR PRIORITY MEN’S HEALTH ISSUES: PROSTATE CANCER, TESTICULAR CANCER, POOR MENTAL HEALTH AND PHYSICAL INACTIVITY.

We want men living with and beyond testicular cancer to have the treatment and care needed to be physically and mentally well. We fund innovative, breakthrough research and collaborative projects to accelerate health outcomes for men with testicular cancer. The global projects focused on better understanding the biology and genetics of testicular cancer and its treatment. Whilst the current treatment of the disease is highly successful, we must do more to improve the quality of men’s lives.

WHAT IS TESTICULAR CANCER?

Testicular cancer starts as an abnormal growth or tumour that develops in one or both testicles. The testicles are part of the male reproductive system and are responsible for the production of male hormones (mostly testosterone) and sperm. Testicular cancer commonly presents as a small hard lump, with swelling or a change in the consistency of the testicle. Some men also experience a dull ache in the testicle or lower abdomen. In the majority of cases, only one testicle is affected. Men, regardless of age, who find such an abnormality, should go to the doctor immediately.

Testicular cancer is a highly treatable type of cancer with a very good cure rate (better than 95%) if found and treated early. Whilst the current treatment of the disease is highly successful, there’s a need to do more to improve the quality of men’s lives in the period after treatment. Some treatments can have effects such as increased risk of cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis, altered sexual function and a reduced quality of life.

Because of the relative success in treating this disease, and the relatively fewer cases experienced compared to other cancers, testicular cancer is often the “forgotten cancer”. In addition to improving the quality of life for survivors, more work needs to be done to resolve the significant challenges associated with second line treatment, when initial therapy is unsuccessful.

ARE THERE DIFFERENT TYPES OF TESTICULAR CANCER?

Cancers of the testicle are named after the type of cell in which they develop. Testicular cancer can be grouped into three types of tumours:

- Germ cell tumours
- Stromal tumours
- Secondary testicular tumours

More than 90% of testicular cancers develop in germ cells, which are responsible for the production of sperm. There are two main types of germ cell tumours; seminomas and non-seminomas. Testicular cancer can
include a mix of seminoma and non-seminoma cells or a combination of the different types of non-seminoma.

A small number of testicular cancers start in cells that make up the supportive (structural) and hormone producing tissue of the testicles and are known as stromal tumours.

Secondary testicular tumours are caused by cancerous cells that have spread to the testicles from other parts of the body (metastasis). These cancers are much rarer than the previous forms of testicular cancer.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Men may experience few or no symptoms of testicular cancer, however important warning signs to watch for include:

- Swelling or a lump in either testicle (usually painless)
- A feeling of heaviness in the scrotum
- Change in the size and shape of the testicles
- Aches or pain in the lower abdomen or groin
- A sudden build-up of fluid in the scrotum
- Pain or discomfort in a testicle or in the scrotum
- Enlargement or tenderness of the breast tissue

WHAT ARE THE RISK FACTORS?

Young men between the age of 18 and 40 years are at the highest risk of developing testicular cancer. The causes of testicular cancer are unknown, however there are possible factors that may increase a man’s risk including:

- Undescended testes at birth
- Family history (father or brother with testicular cancer)
- Previous occurrence of testicular cancer (Around one in 25 men who have had cancer in one testicle are likely to develop cancer in the other testicle at some stage)

Down syndrome may also increases a man’s risk.

There is no known link between testicular cancer and injury to the testicles, sporting strains, hot baths or wearing tight clothes.

WHAT TREATMENT OPTIONS ARE THERE?

Testicular cancer is a highly treatable cancer. It can be effectively treated, and potentially cured, if diagnosed and treated early. Even in advanced cases, testicular cancer can be effectively treated and often cured. If you are diagnosed, the most important step is to talk to your doctor about treatment choices.

In choosing a treatment plan, factors such as your overall health and the type and stage of the cancer should be considered. You may consider getting a second or third doctor’s opinion.

In most men with testicular cancer, treatment involves the surgical removal of the affected testicle. This may be followed with surveillance, chemotherapy or radiotherapy.

ORCHIECTOMY

(surgical removal of the affected testis) is done under general anesthetic. The removed testis is then sent to a pathology laboratory to confirm the stage and type of cancer.

CHEMOTHERAPY OR RADIOTHERAPY

is often prescribed after surgery to treat any remaining cancer cells that may have spread to other parts of the body, such as lymph nodes. The level or amount will differ for each man and will depend on the stage and type of cancer.

TREATMENT SIDE EFFECTS

Testicular cancer and the removal of one testicle should not alter sexual function or fertility. The effect on fertility following
removal of one of the testicles is minimal as a single testicle produces such large numbers of sperm.

For those men who require further treatment with chemotherapy, fertility is likely to be affected, at least temporarily. You can speak to your doctor or make use of a support service such as Orchid for more information about sperm banking before commencing chemotherapy or radiation.

WHAT IS TESTICULAR SELF-EXAMINATION (TSE)?

Regular self-examination of the testicles is important for young men, particularly those at risk of testicular cancer. Being familiar with the size, shape and usual level of lumpiness can help you determine if something is not quite right. A testicular self-examination can help a man find any changes in the testes early, so that if treatment is needed it can start as early as possible.

Here’s a step-by-step guide for conducting a testicular self-examination.

**TESTICULAR SELF-EXAMINATION**

Using the palm of your hand, support your scrotum. Gently roll one testis between the thumb and fingers to feel for any lumps or swellings in or on the surface of the testis. Repeat with the other testis. The testes should feel firm and the surface should feel smooth.

Using the thumb and fingers, feel along the epididymis at the back of the testis. The epididymis is a soft, highly coiled tube that carries sperm from the testis to the vas deferens. Check for any swelling in this area. If there is any change to how the testes feel normally, see your local doctor (GP) straight away.

Even if you have had testicular cancer, or are being treated, it is important to still perform a testicular self-examination. About 1 in 25 men who have had testicular cancer may develop cancer in the other testis.

It is normal for one testis to be slightly bigger than the other and the left testis often hangs lower than the right.
TESTICULAR CANCER IS THE MOST COMMON CANCER, IN YOUNG MEN AGED 25-49 YEARS.

THE RATE OF MEN BEING DIAGNOSED WITH TESTICULAR CANCER HAS DOUBLED OVER THE PAST 50 YEARS, THE REASON FOR THIS IS UNKNOWN.

AROUND 2,200 MEN IN THE UK WERE DIAGNOSED IN 2011.

30-34 IS THE PEAK AGE OF WHEN A MAN IS DIAGNOSED WITH TESTICULAR CANCER IN THE UK.
THE MOVEMBER FOUNDATION IS A GLOBAL MEN’S CHARITY

The Foundation raises funds that deliver innovative, breakthrough programmes that allow men to live happier, healthier and longer lives. Millions have joined the men’s health movement, raising £402 million and funding over 1,000 projects, focusing on prostate cancer, testicular cancer, poor mental health and physical inactivity.

In addition to tackling male specific cancers, we are committed to encouraging men to stay healthy in all areas of their life, with a specific focus on men being active, socially connected and becoming more open to discussing their health and ‘the big stuff’ in their lives.

Our vision is to have an everlasting impact on the face of men’s health.

FOR MORE DETAILED INFORMATION VISIT ORCHID

Orchid exists to save men’s lives from testicular, prostate and penile cancers through a range of support services, pioneering research and promoting awareness.

Whether you have been recently diagnosed with a male cancer, are a family member seeking more information or a healthcare professional looking to run an information session, Orchid can help.

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