

What You Should Know About Scrotal Masses

What is the scrotum?

The scrotum is the sac that holds the testicles. Normally, the testicles are smooth, and the cord holding them feels like a rope. This cord is called the spermatic cord. Any swelling or lump in or on the scrotum is called a scrotal mass (*see drawing*).

Who gets a scrotal mass and why?

A testicle is more likely to become twisted or turned in children and young adults. This happens suddenly and is very painful. If you have a twisted testicle, you might feel sick or need to throw up.

Some men get an infection in the epididymis (the tube that carries sperm from the testicle to the penis). This infection is called epididymitis.

Cancer can also cause a lump in the scrotum. People with a history of a testicle that hasn't dropped or a family history of testicular cancer, Klinefelter syndrome, or testicular infection have a higher chance of getting testicular cancer.

When do I need to see my doctor?

You should see your doctor if you have a scrotal mass. If you have a painful, swollen scrotum, you should go to the emergency room.

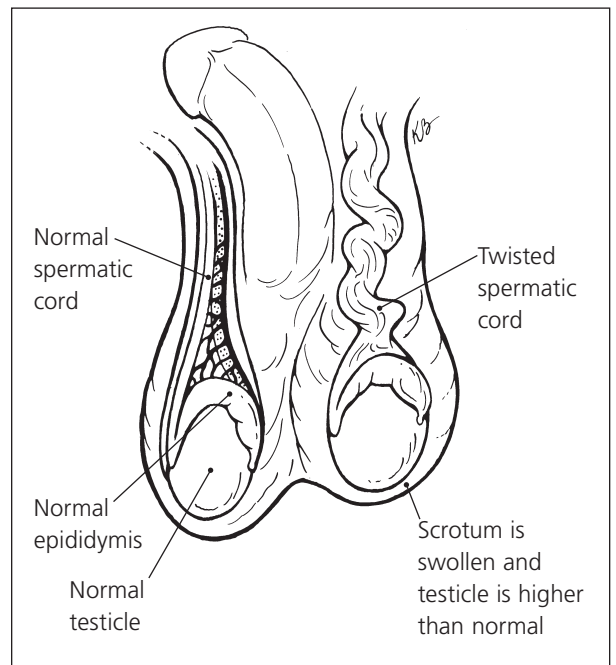


ILLUSTRATION BY KATHRYN BORN

What can I expect?

Your doctor will ask you some questions about your symptoms and examine your scrotum. He or she may also order blood tests, urine tests, or an ultrasound.

Most causes of scrotal mass can be treated. Even testicular cancer is often treatable.

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This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.

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