



Answers for  
Sailors, Marines & their families

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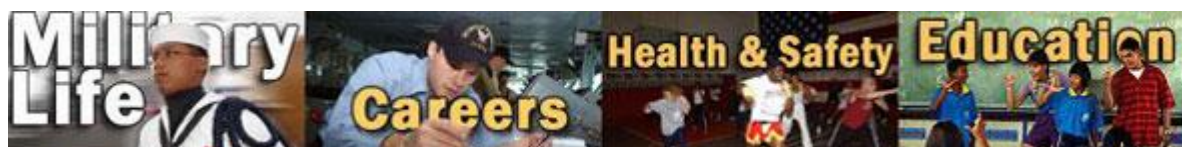
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## Testicular Cancer: Self-exams for Men

By Jennifer Dyer Cornelissen  
(Last Reviewed Friday, September 09, 2005)

Cyclist Lance Armstrong and comedian Tom Green have more than fame in common — both defeated testicular cancer, the most common form of cancer among men ages 15 to 35. This disease is one of the most [curable cancers](#), especially if caught early, but can be fatal if ignored. For this reason, medical professionals recommend that every young man perform a testicular self-exam (TSE) regularly as a precautionary measure to detect testicular cancer.

### Know the Risks

According to the National Cancer Institute, approximately 8,000 cases of testicular cancer occur each year, with 360 fatalities.

There is no known cause for the disease, but certain factors increase your risk of developing it, including:

- | an un-descended or surgically descended testicle
- | a family history of testicular cancer
- | being Caucasian, though all races are at risk
- | testicular or genetic abnormalities, such as Klinefelter's syndrome

The American Cancer Society (ACS) recommends that men with risk factors perform self-exams regularly. Some doctors also recommend blood screening tests for tumor markers and for prostate-specific antigen (PSA), though these may be unreliable indicators.

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### Recognize the Symptoms

The most common symptom of testicular cancer is a painless, solid mass in the testicle, say ACS researchers. Other symptoms may include:

- | scrotal swelling or tenderness
- | dull pain or sense of heaviness in the groin
- | abdominal or lower-back pain
- | increased fluid in the scrotum
- | rarely, breast enlargement or sensitivity

### Perform a Testicular Self-exam

According to Dr. Brian Auge, a urologist at Naval Medical Center San Diego, regular self-exams are critical for early detection. Testicular cancer grows quickly, and any delay in diagnosis may increase the size of the mass and decrease the odds of survival, he explains. Besides, Dr. Auge adds, a self-exam is "easy, convenient, noninvasive, and pain-free."

Follow these steps to perform a testicular [self-exam](#):

1. Check your scrotum in the mirror for any noticeable swelling or changes.
2. Take a warm bath or shower so that your skin relaxes.
3. Cup your scrotum in both hands so that you can examine each testicle individually. Place the testicle between your thumb and fingers, with your thumb above and index and ring fingers below. Gently roll your testicle between your fingers, feeling for firm lumps. Be sure to squeeze all portions of the testicle. Compare one testicle to the other for reference.
4. Locate your epididymis. It runs along the back of the testicle and feels ropy. Don't confuse it with an abnormal mass. A healthy testicle feels firm and smooth, with a rubbery consistency.
5. Repeat with other testicle.
6. If you find an unusual lump, or if one testicle is different from the other, report it to your health professional immediately.

### What to Do Next

A lump in your testicle may not be testicular cancer. Your doctor will make a diagnosis after performing a physical exam and possibly some diagnostic tests.

If you are diagnosed with testicular cancer, recognize that the disease is [highly treatable](#), especially in the early stages.

To learn more, speak with your doctor. You can also visit the [American Cancer Society](#) or [The Testicular Cancer Resource Center](#), or call the National Cancer Institute at 1-800-4-CANCER.

You can help minimize the risks of testicular cancer by performing a simple exam once a month. "It can save a life," says Dr. Auge.



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