

Undescended Testicle (Cryptorchidism)

Urology Care
FOUNDATION™

*The Official Foundation of the
American Urological Association*

HOW DOES THE MALE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM FORM?

The penis, testicles and scrotum take shape in the mother's womb. Normal testicles form early in a baby's growth. They start in the lower belly (abdomen) and drop into the scrotum before a boy is born.

WHAT IS UNDESCENDED TESTICLES?

Undescended testicle is when one or both of the testicles don't drop into place. The scrotum looks and feels empty. Most of the time there are no other issues. The scientific name is called cryptorchidism.

Testicles that don't drop, won't work the way they should. In the abdomen, they will be too warm. This stops sperm from growing as well. Sperm are very tiny male sex cells that like to keep cool. This is why the scrotum hangs below the body. Unhealthy sperm leads to infertility (when a man can't make a baby). There are different types of undescended testicles:

- Nonpalpable testicle is a testicle that cannot be felt in an exam. It may be in the abdomen (undescended), very small (atrophic) or not there at all.
- Retractable testicle is when the testes move freely from the scrotum to the groin. They can be moved by hand from the groin to the scrotum.
- Ascending testicle is when the testicle isn't attached in the scrotum. It is noticed as the child grows.

Luckily, about half of the boys born this way will grow normally. Soon after birth, the testicle will drop into place. If it doesn't after 6 months, treatment may be needed.

WHAT CAUSES UNDESCENDED TESTICLES?

It is not clear why the testicles don't drop.

HOW IS AN UNDESCENDED TESTICLE TREATED?

Surgery is the main form of treatment for an undescended testicle. A pediatric urologist can talk with you about options. Drugs and hormone treatments have not been found to help. There are two main types of surgery for undescended testicles, they are:

- Orchiopexy - Usually, a very quick and successful type of surgery. It includes two small cuts. One cut to find the testicle, and another cut to put the testicle in place. Almost always, the child can go home the same day.
- Laparoscopic surgery - This surgery is performed when the urologist can't find the testicles. A special, tiny camera and tools are used to work inside the child's body. With this, the testicle(s) are found and freed from nearby tissue. They are then moved into place and secured there.

If the testicle is too high in the abdomen, other treatment may be needed.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER

- Should we wait to treat my baby?
- Are there any side effects from surgery?
- How long is recovery?
- Is there anything we should do after surgery to care for my baby?
- Will my baby have any problems in the future if he's treated now?

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- Will my baby be fertile and able to have children of his own?
- Can we do anything to lower my baby's risk for testicular cancer in the future?

ABOUT UROLOGY CARE FOUNDATION

The Urology Care Foundation is the world's leading urologic Foundation - and the official Foundation of the American Urological Association. We provide information for those actively managing their urologic health and those ready to make healthy changes in their lives. Our information is based on the American Urological Association resources and is reviewed by medical experts.

To learn more about different urologic issues visit UrologyHealth.org/UrologicConditions. Go to UrologyHealth.org/FindAUrologist to find a doctor near you.

DISCLAIMER

This information is not a tool for self-diagnosis or a substitute for professional medical advice. It is not to be used or relied on for that purpose. Please talk to your urologist or health care provider about your health concerns. Always consult a health care provider before you start or stop any treatments, including medications.

For copies of printed materials about undescended testicle and other urologic conditions, visit UrologyHealth.org/Order or call 800-828-7866.