

UR04 Surgery for Benign Scrotal Lumps

Expires end of February 2023

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If you would like this information in different languages or formats (e.g. audio, Braille or large print), please ask a member of the healthcare team.

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What is a benign scrotal lump?

A benign scrotal lump is a lump in your scrotum that is not caused by cancer.

Your surgeon has suggested an operation to remove the lump in your scrotum. However, it is your decision to go ahead with the operation or not. This document will give you information about the benefits and risks to help you to make an informed decision.

If you have any questions that this document does not answer, it is important that you ask your surgeon or the healthcare team. Once all your questions have been answered and you feel ready to go ahead with the procedure, you will be asked to sign the informed consent form. This is the final step in the decision-making process. However, you can still change your mind at any point.

How does a benign scrotal lump happen?

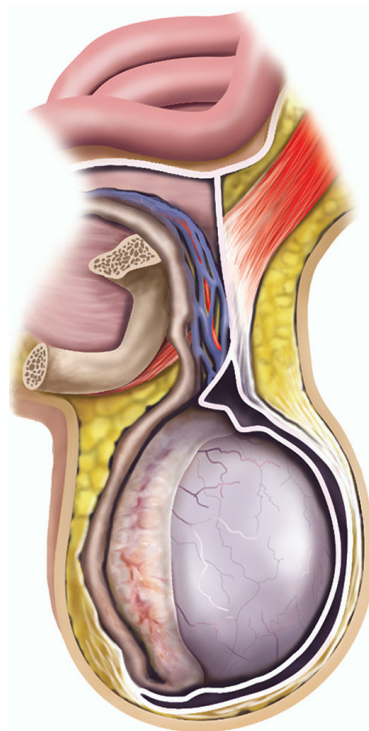
There are three types of benign scrotal lump.

- A hydrocele is a build-up of fluid around a testicle. There is a sheath around your testicle that contains a small amount of fluid. Fluid can build up because of an injury or inflammation. In some tropical climates, infection can cause a hydrocele.
- An epididymal cyst is a collection of fluid in the epididymis (a tube-like structure that stores sperm). Sperm drains out of small ducts and some of these can get blocked, causing a build-up of fluid. The sperm count is not affected as there are lots of other ducts.
- A sperm granuloma is a small painful swelling caused by sperm sometimes leaking following a vasectomy. A vasectomy involves cutting both the tubes (vas deferens) that carry sperm from your testicles.

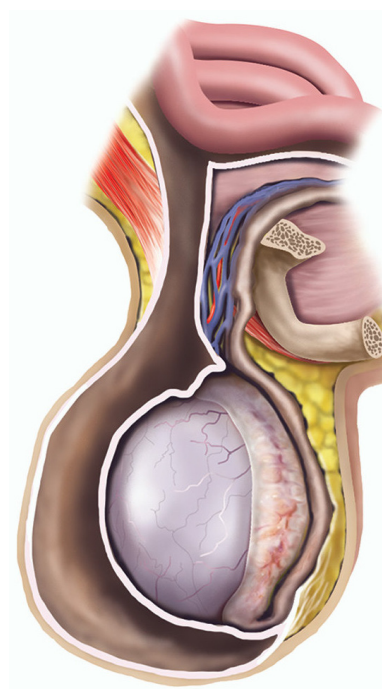
What are the benefits of surgery?

If the lump is large, surgery will ease any discomfort you may have and make it easier for you to walk.

If you want to have children, it is best to leave an epididymal cyst alone. Surgery in the area of the epididymis can cause scarring which reduces your fertility.



A normal testicle



A hydrocele

Are there any alternatives to surgery?

The fluid can be removed using a needle but the fluid usually builds up again. It is possible to inject a drug that prevents the fluid from coming back

but this may be uncomfortable and can cause an infection.

What will happen if I decide not to have the operation?

The lump will not usually settle without treatment. If the lump is small and is not tender, it can be left alone. A large lump can be tender, cause discomfort or pain, and make it difficult to walk.

A hydrocele can get infected. If antibiotics do not effectively treat the infection, you will need another operation to remove the infected tissue.

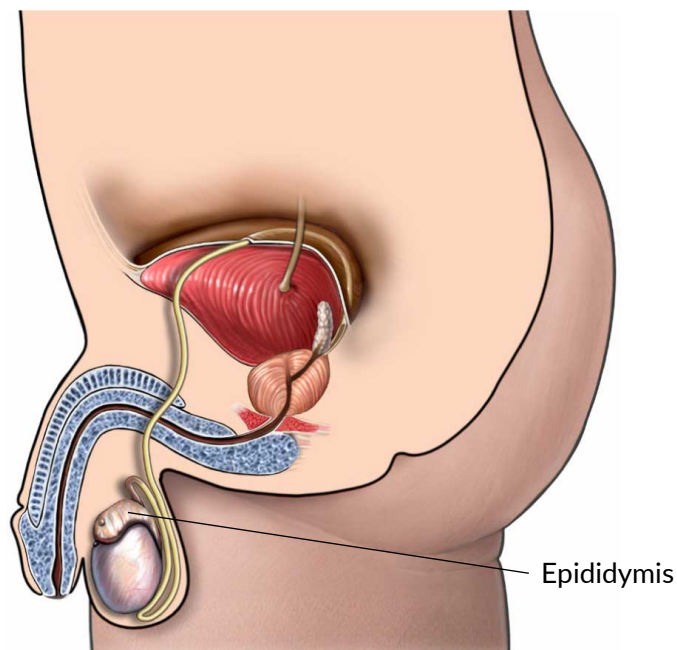
What does the operation involve?

The healthcare team will carry out a number of checks to make sure you have the operation you came in for. You can help by confirming to your surgeon and the healthcare team your name and the operation you are having.

The operation is usually performed under a general anaesthetic but various anaesthetic techniques are possible. Your anaesthetist will discuss the options with you.

You may be given antibiotics during the operation to reduce the risk of infection.

The operation usually takes 20 to 50 minutes. Your surgeon will make a small cut on your scrotum. For a hydrocele, your surgeon will remove the fluid from the sheath. To prevent the fluid from coming back, your surgeon will either remove the sheath or stitch it together.



The position of the epididymis

Your surgeon will remove an epididymal cyst. This will usually involve removing part of or all the epididymis.

Your surgeon will close the small cut with stitches.

What should I do about my medication?

Make sure your healthcare team knows about all the medication you take and follow their advice. This includes all blood-thinning medication as well as herbal and complementary remedies, dietary supplements, and medication you can buy over the counter.

How can I prepare myself for the operation?

If you smoke, stopping smoking now may reduce your risk of developing complications and will improve your long-term health.

Try to maintain a healthy weight. You have a higher risk of developing complications if you are overweight.

Regular exercise should help to prepare you for the operation, help you to recover and improve your long-term health. Before you start exercising, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

You can reduce your risk of infection in a surgical wound.

- Part of your scrotum may need to be shaved before the operation. You will either be asked to do this yourself when you are in hospital or the healthcare team will do it for you.
- Try to have a bath or shower either the day before or on the day of the operation and make sure your scrotum is clean.
- Keep warm around the time of the operation. Let the healthcare team know if you feel cold.
- If you are diabetic, keep your blood sugar levels under control around the time of your procedure.

If you have not had the coronavirus (Covid-19) vaccine, you may be at an increased risk of serious illness related to Covid-19 while you recover. Speak to your doctor or healthcare team if you would like to have the vaccine.

What complications can happen?

The healthcare team will try to reduce the risk of complications.

Any numbers which relate to risk are from studies of people who have had this operation. Your doctor may be able to tell you if the risk of a complication is higher or lower for you. Some risks are higher if you are older, obese, you are a smoker or have other health problems. These health problems include diabetes, heart disease or lung disease.

Some complications can be serious and can even cause death.

You should ask your doctor if there is anything you do not understand.

Your anaesthetist will be able to discuss with you the possible complications of having an anaesthetic.

General complications of any operation

- Bleeding during or after the operation (risk: 1 in 6). It is common for your scrotum to be bruised. If your surgeon is concerned that the bleeding is heavy, they may insert a drain (tube) in your wound. Heavy bleeding can cause a large clot and swelling in your scrotum.
- Allergic reaction to the equipment, materials or medication. The healthcare team is trained to

detect and treat any reactions that might happen. Let your doctor know if you have any allergies or if you have reacted to any medication or tests in the past.

- Chest infection. If you have the operation within 6 weeks of catching Covid-19, your risk of a chest infection is increased (see the 'Covid-19' section for more information).

Specific complications of this operation

- Difficulty passing urine. You may need a catheter (tube) in your bladder for 1 to 2 days.
- Infection of the surgical site (wound) (risk: 1 in 10). This is usually mild. It is usually safe to shower after 2 days but you should check with the healthcare team. Let the healthcare team know if you get a high temperature, notice pus in your wound, or if your wound becomes red, sore or painful. An infection usually settles with antibiotics but you may need special dressings and your wound may take some time to heal. In some cases another operation might be needed. Do not take antibiotics unless you are told you need them.
- Reduced fertility if the surgery is to treat an epididymal cyst. Surgery in the area of the epididymis can cause scarring which reduces fertility.

Covid-19

A recent Covid-19 infection increases your risk of lung complications or death if you have an operation under general anaesthetic. This risk reduces the longer it is since the infection. After 7 weeks the risk is no higher than someone who has not had Covid-19. However, if you still have symptoms the risk remains high. The risk also depends on your age, overall health and the type of surgery you are having.

You must follow instructions to self-isolate and take a Covid-19 test before your operation. If you have had Covid-19 up to 7 weeks before the operation you should discuss the risks and benefits of delaying it with your surgeon.

Consequences of this procedure

- Pain is usually only mild and easily controlled with simple painkillers such as paracetamol. If you have severe pain, let your surgeon know.

How soon will I recover?

In hospital

After the operation you will be transferred to the recovery area. You should be able to go home the same day or the day after. However, your doctor may recommend that you stay a little longer.

Wearing a scrotal support or firm underwear will help ease any discomfort, and minimise bruising and swelling.

If you are worried about anything, in hospital or at home, contact the healthcare team. They should be able to reassure you or identify and treat any complications.

Returning to normal activities

If you had sedation or a general anaesthetic and you do go home the same day:

- a responsible adult should take you home in a car or taxi and stay with you for at least 24 hours;
- you should be near a telephone in case of an emergency;
- do not drive, operate machinery or do any potentially dangerous activities (this includes cooking) for at least 24 hours and not until you have fully recovered feeling, movement and co-ordination; and
- do not sign legal documents or drink alcohol for at least 24 hours.

Do not do outdoor activities for 2 days. Do not do strenuous exercise, like running and riding a bicycle, for 5 to 7 days. Most men can return to normal activities after 2 to 4 weeks.

If you notice swelling or have a discharge from your wounds, or still have pain after 4 weeks, contact your doctor.

Regular exercise should help you to return to normal activities as soon as possible. Before you start exercising, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

Do not drive until you can control your vehicle, including in an emergency, and always check your insurance policy and with the healthcare team.

Ask your healthcare team if you need to do a Covid-19 test when you get home.

The future

Most men make a good recovery.

Sometimes the lump comes back. There is usually more than one epididymal cyst and surgery can only treat the larger ones. If the smaller ones get larger, the problem will come back. For a hydrocele, surgery usually cures the problem but fluid can build up again and you may need another operation (risk: 1 in 50).

Summary

A benign scrotal lump is a lump in your scrotum that is not caused by cancer. Most of them can be left alone but some cause problems and can be treated by surgery.

Surgery is usually safe and effective but complications can happen. You need to know about them to help you to make an informed decision about surgery. Knowing about them will also help to detect and treat any problems early.

Keep this information document. Use it to help you if you need to talk to the healthcare team.

Some information, such as risk and complication statistics, is taken from global studies and/or databases. Please ask your surgeon or doctor for more information about the risks that are specific to you, and they may be able to tell you about any other suitable treatments options.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant healthcare team would give you.

Acknowledgements

Reviewers: Angus Lecuona (MBCChB, FCUrol(SA), MMED, FRACS), Caroline Dowling (MS, FRACS)
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