

Information for Parents and Carers about other testicular problems

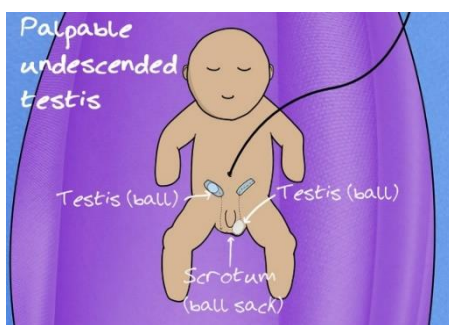
Where do the testes normally develop?

In a male foetus, the testes develop in the abdomen, near the kidneys. The testes then slowly travel down into the scrotum via a 'tube' created between the muscle layers of the abdominal wall, usually completing this journey before the baby is born. The 'tube' then closes up.

What happens if one or both testes don't descend normally?

Undescended testis

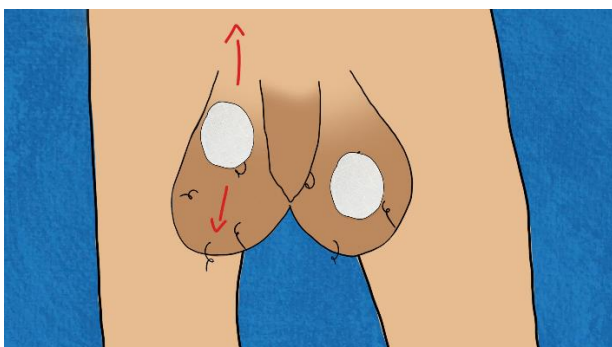
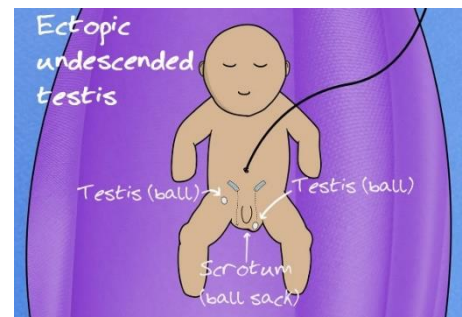
In about 1% of boys, one or both testes never make it all the way to the scrotum and will require an operation to bring the testis into the correct location. The testis may be:



- 'Palpable', which means you (or a doctor) can feel it, but it hasn't completed its descent (see diagram, left) so it is higher up than it should be.
- 'Impalpable', which means you can't feel it anywhere. Commonly, this is because it is still located in the abdomen just near the top of the tube, or further down along the normal pathway. More rarely, it may be *ectopic*, meaning it has slightly lost its way from the usual path of descent (see diagram, below right).

Retractile testis

If one or both testes seem(s) to move between the scrotum (for example when relaxing in a warm bath) and higher in the groin, such testes are called 'retractile' as they pull back or retract up out of the scrotum (see diagram below).



How worried should we be if my son has an undescended or mobile testis?



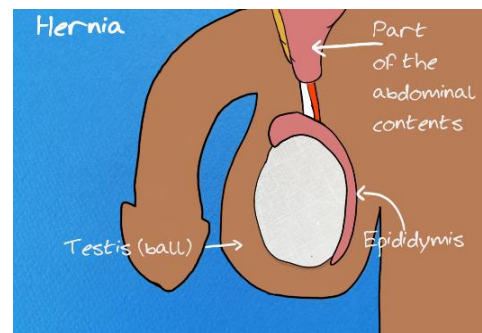
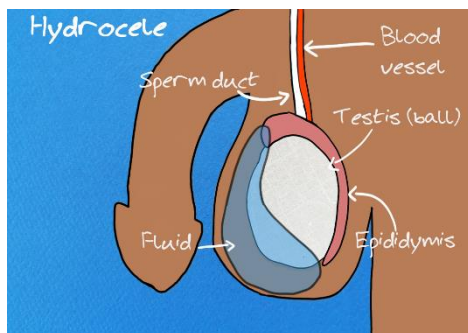
It is worth getting your child checked out by a General Practitioner (GP) if you suspect that one or both of his testes are not in his scrotum. This is because there is an increased chance of testicular cancer or subfertility in an undescended testis, if left untreated, compared to testes positioned normally in the scrotum. Surgery to relocate the testis/testes is relatively simple and does not usually require an overnight hospital stay.

Retractile testes do not usually require urgent intervention and are usually monitored rather than operated on (but still get them checked out by your family doctor who can inform you how to monitor them). In most cases, as the testis becomes bigger during puberty, the increased weight will then keep it in the scrotum. However, a retractile testis may occasionally cause pain when retracting; this can be corrected by relatively minor surgery, so do see a doctor if in pain.

What happens if the 'tube' doesn't close completely?

In some cases, the tube doesn't close up completely after the testis descends. This can lead to:

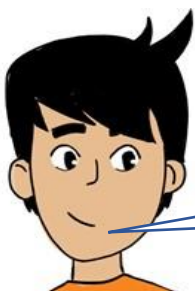
- A hydrocele. This is when the tube is open just enough to allow a small amount of fluid to move from the abdomen into the scrotum (see below).
- A hernia. This is when the tube allows some abdominal fat, or occasionally a bit of the intestine, to move through the tube towards the scrotum (see below).



How worried should we be if we suspect a hydrocele or hernia?

A hydrocele present since birth is not usually a cause for concern and will often disappear by itself before the age of 2 years. However, hydroceles in older boys are more unusual and should be reviewed by a doctor, especially if not present from birth.

A hernia will never resolve on its own and requires medical review (telling the difference between a hydrocele and a hernia is sometimes difficult, so do seek advice). **If testicular swelling is accompanied by testicular or abdominal pain and/or nausea**, these may be signs of more serious conditions such as [testicular torsion](#) or a hernia with trapped intestinal tissue. These conditions require **urgent surgery** to restore blood supply. If in doubt, seek medical attention.

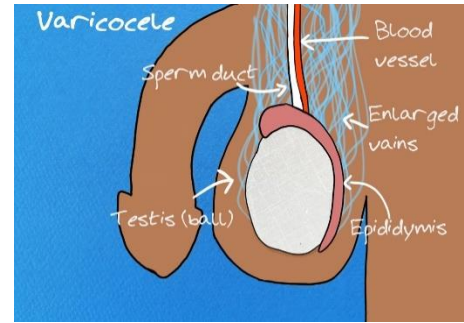


It is important to know how to **check your testes regularly**.

Check out our really helpful video [here](#) for more information!

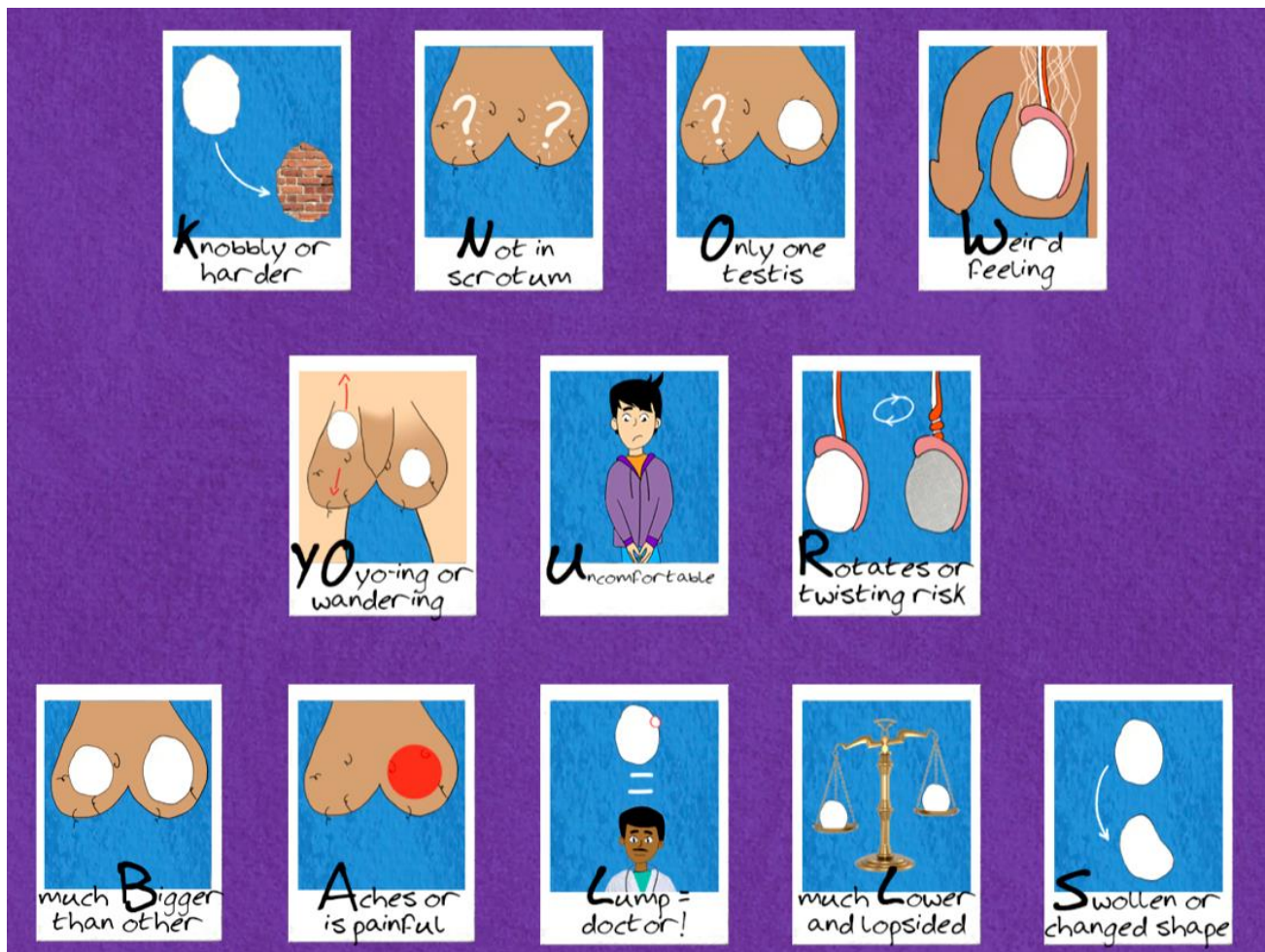
What other problems might make a testis feel different?

Self-examination may reveal some other changes to testis size and firmness that should be checked out by a doctor, particularly as it can be difficult to tell the difference between these conditions without specific medical training. For example, fluid may collect in a small sac in the epididymis, causing the formation of a cyst, or a varicocele may develop, which is when veins around the testis enlarge (see right).



Anything that feels different in terms of size, shape or texture of the testis should be checked by a doctor, as most problems can soon be resolved to the comfort and relief of all concerned!

Check in with your doctor if you notice any of the below:



Scan here for more information on testicular health, or visit <https://www.testicularhealth.info/>