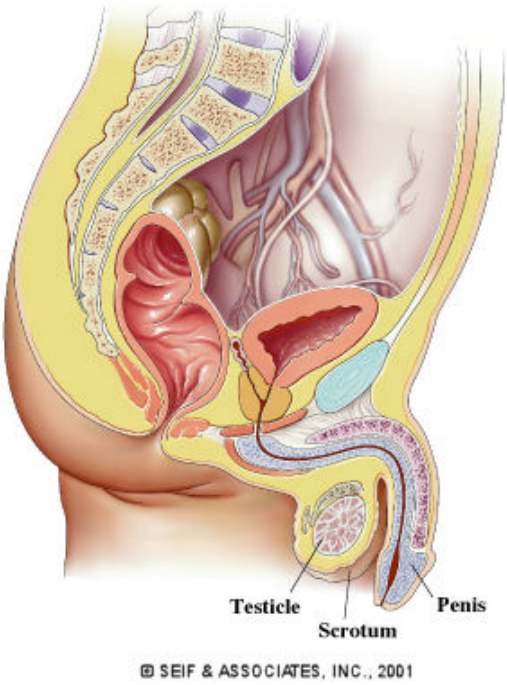
Undescended Testicle, Cryptorchidism

During the development of a baby, the testicles of a male fetus form inside the belly (*abdomen*). Shortly before birth, the boy's testicles usually descend from the abdomen. The testicles descend through a tube-like space between the muscles in the groin (*inguinal canal*), down into the scrotum. When a testicle does not make the move it is undescended. It is also called *cryptorchidism*. Undescended testicles are fairly common in premature infants. It occurs in about 3 to 4% of full-term infants. About 65% of the testicles typically descend by 9 months of age.



DIAGNOSIS

The diagnosis is usually made by physical exam. It is apparent when a testicle or testicles are not found in the scrotum on physical exam. Sometimes it may be felt as a lump in the lower abdomen or groin. It may also be found at a later age.

TREATMENT

- Testicles that do not descend by one year of age should be examined.
- Usually the testicle will descend into the scrotum without any treatment during the first year of life. If this does not occur, injections of hormones are sometimes given to stimulate movement of the testicle into the scrotum.
- Surgery to repair this, if needed, should be done by three years of age. This lessens the chances of permanent testicular damage.
- Bringing the testicle into the scrotum increases sperm production.
- Having the testicle in the scrotum makes examination for testicular cancer easier.

PROGNOSIS

- Most cases get better without medical or surgical treatment.
- In cases where testicles do not descend on their own, they may be treated medically. If the medical treatment does not work, then they may be treated surgically.
- If both testicles remain undescended, it usually causes infertility.
- All undescended testicles have a greater risk of cancer regardless of treatment. Correcting the problem makes a self exam of the testicles for cancer possible.
- Be sure to follow-up with your child's caregiver as recommended.

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