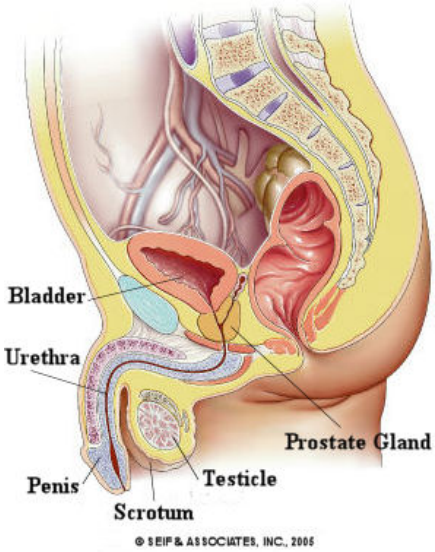
Orchiectomy, Removal of the Testicles

An orchiectomy is the removal of the testicles. This is something you should have discussed at length with your surgeon or caregiver prior to having this done. This is a man's main source of the male sex hormone *testosterone*. An orchiectomy is most often done to treat cancer of the prostate. Prostatic cancer usually needs testosterone to grow.



The main advantages of this procedure are that it is safe, effective and simple with a low risk of problems or complications. Surgery is also less expensive than monthly injections over the long run. The surgery has the same effects as hormone treatment. It eliminates the need for daily pills or monthly shots. Drawbacks to surgery are it is permanent. This procedure can be done in ways that make you appear to be anatomically intact following the surgery. The testicles can be replaced with artificial testicles.

The major disadvantage seems to be psychological. Some men consider this procedure a loss of being a male. However, the psychological impact should be weighed against the therapeutic benefits of the procedure in its treatment for prostate cancer

PROCEDURE

This procedure may be done as an outpatient procedure or sometimes as an inpatient with a short hospital stay. Regular activities are usually resumed within 1 to 2 weeks. Full recovery can take up to a month.

This is a surgery which can be done under local anesthesia. This means the area being worked on will be made numb with a medication similar to Novocaine. Sometimes a general anesthetic or light sedation may be used and you may be sleeping during the procedure. A spinal anesthetic can also be used in which you are numb from the waist down.

After surgery, you will be taken to the recovery area where a nurse will watch you and check your progress. Once awake, stable, and taking fluids well, without other problems you will be allowed to go home.

PROGNOSIS

Orchiectomy may help relieve pain, decrease complications and improve survival for prostate cancer. It often causes the tumor to shrink and relieves bone pain. The bone pain comes from the cancer of the prostate that has spread there. Although this may prolong survival, it cannot cure the cancer.

The likely side effects of this surgery include:

- Loss of sexual interest (*libido*).
- Hot flashes.
- Weight gain.
- Loss of bone density (*osteoporosis*).
- Erection problems.
- Breast enlargement (*gynecomastia*).
- Loss of muscle mass.
- Inability to produce sperm and therefore have children (*sterility*).

Both impotence and gynecomastia can be treated.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS AFTER YOUR SURGERY

- Once home, an ice pack applied to the operative site for fifteen minutes, four times per day may help with discomfort and keep swelling down. Place a towel between your skin and the ice pack.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.

- You may continue a normal diet and activities as directed.
- There should be no heavy lifting (more than 10 pounds), strenuous activities or contact sports for four weeks, or as directed.
- Change dressings as directed. Keep the wound dry and clean. The wound may be washed gently with soap and water. Gently blot or dab dry without rubbing. Do not take baths, use swimming pools or hot tubs for ten days, or as instructed by your caregivers.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- There is redness, swelling, or increasing pain in the wound area.
- Pus is coming from the wound.
- An unexplained oral temperature above 101º F (38.3º C) develops.
- You notice a foul smell coming from the wound or dressing.
- A breaking open of the wound (edges not staying together) after sutures have been removed.
- There is increasing abdominal pain.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- A rash develops.
- You have difficulty breathing, or you develop a reaction or side effects to medications given.

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