

UNDESCENDED TESTIS

What happens under normal conditions?



Normal testes form in the abdominal cavity. In the last three months of the pregnancy they gradually descend into the scrotal area. The testes in the infant make hormones primarily. After puberty,

they also start producing sperms.

What are undescended testicles and how are they diagnosed?

When the testis fails to descend into their normal position in the scrotum it is called undescended testis. This condition is easily diagnosed on routine examination of the infant. It is important to emphasize that undescended testes are present in about 2% of newborns (and up to 20% of premature newborns). A majority of these will spontaneously descend into the scrotum during the first three months of life. If the testis does not descend into the scrotum even after 3 months of age it is very unlikely to descend into the scrotum. Then it will need to be brought down into the scrotum surgically.

What is the need to correct undescended testis?

The function of the testis that is production of sperms occurs best at a temperature slightly lower than normal body temperature. The temperature of

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scrotum is 1-2 degrees cooler than the body temperature and hence is the ideal location for the testicle.

What are the conditions associated with undescended testis?

Testes that do not descend into the scrotum are not likely to function normally. Because they may not make sperm, they can be a cause of infertility, especially when both testes are affected. They are also associated with a higher risk of testicular cancer in adulthood (although the risk is still less than one in 100). Many times there is also an associated hernia when the testicles fail to descend normally.

What causes undescended testicles?

In most children with this condition it is not known why the testicles fail to descend.

What tests will be done in a child with undescended testis?

To begin with an ultrasound examination of the abdomen will be done to pick up the location of the testis and also rule out any other developmental anomalies. If the ultrasound is not able to pick up the testis then the child will need to undergo laparoscopy. In this a thin endoscope is inserted into the abdominal cavity and an attempt is made to find out the location of the testis. If a testicle is found, it is brought down into the scrotum in the same sitting.

When should the child undergo operation for undescended testis?

The child can undergo operation anytime after six

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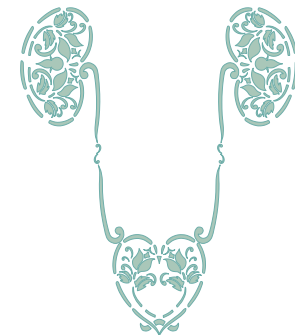
months of age. The time between 6 and 12 months of age is generally considered best, when taking into account surgical, anesthetic and psychological factors.

What operation is done for undescended testis?

Under anesthesia, an incision is given in the groin. Through this incision the testis is located and gently brought down and fixed into the scrotal skin sac. In some cases, if the testicle is too high for this simple operation and more complex procedures (and sometimes even two operations) are needed.

What can be expected after treatment?

After treatment, the testicle usually develops to normal size in the scrotum. However, in some cases the testicle is abnormal to start with and never grows properly. In other cases, even though it is of normal size, sperm never develop.



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