

Patient information

Epididymo-orchitis

Urology Department

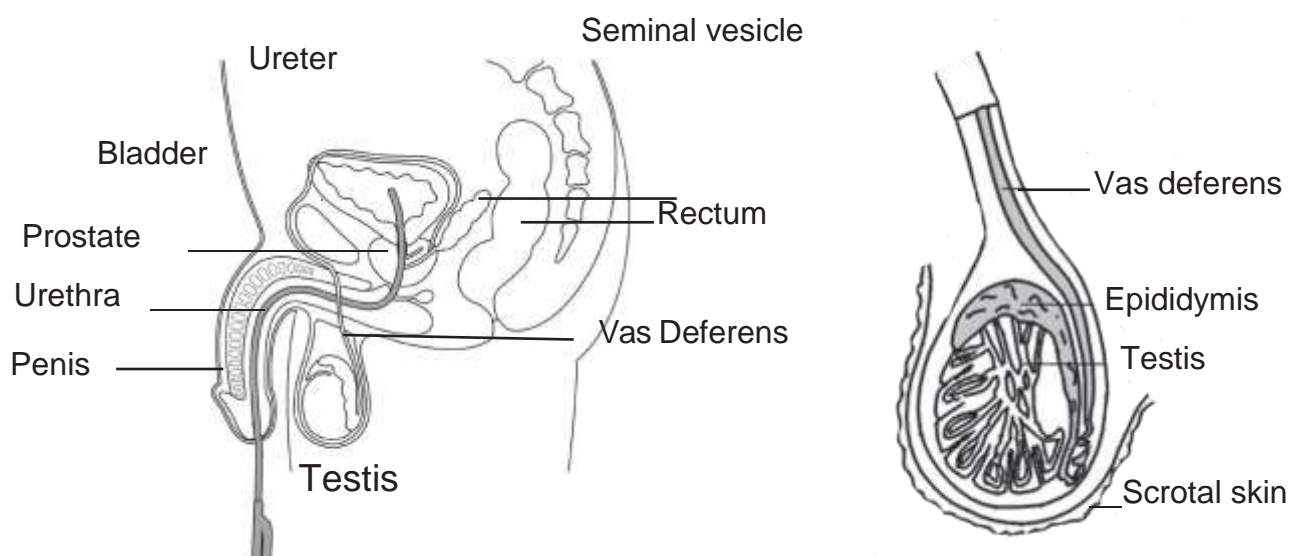
Epididymo-orchitis is inflammation of the testis and epididymis. It is usually due to infection. Antibiotics are usually prescribed. Full recovery is usual. Complications are uncommon.

What is epididymo-orchitis?

Orchitis means inflammation of a testis (testicle).

Epididymitis means inflammation of the epididymis (the structure next to the testes that is involved in making sperm).

Typically, if a testis becomes inflamed then the nearby epididymis also becomes inflamed (and vice-versa). This is called epididymo-orchitis.



What causes epididymo-orchitis?

Infection is the usual cause.

- Urine infections sometimes track back along the vas deferens to cause epididymo-orchitis.
- Infection of the prostate or urethra can also track down the vas deferens to the testes. Sexually transmitted infections such as chlamydia or gonorrhoea are common causes of urethral infection which may also cause epididymo-orchitis.
- Operations to the prostate or urethra may allow bacteria into the urethra which may track down to the testes. Epididymo-orchitis used to be a common complication after prostatectomy (removal of the prostate). This is now rare due to better surgical techniques and antibiotics.
- Infection from other parts of the body can, rarely, travel in the blood to the testes. For example, TB (tuberculosis) sometimes affects the testes.
- Infections are more common in men who have urethral catheters (a tube that drains the bladder).

Viral Infections

- The mumps virus used to be a common cause. Most people with mumps develop swelling of the parotid salivary glands. However, mumps in boys also causes epididymo-orchitis in about one in five cases. The virus gets to the testes via the bloodstream. This cause is now uncommon since the MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) immunisation is now routinely given to children.
- Other virus infections are uncommon causes of epididymo-orchitis.

What are the symptoms of epididymo-orchitis?

Symptoms usually develop quickly - over a day or so. The affected epididymis and testis swell rapidly, and the scrotum becomes enlarged, tender, and red. It can be very painful.

There may be other symptoms if the epididymo-orchitis is a complication from another infection. For example: pain on passing urine if you have a urine infection; a discharge from the penis if you have a urethral infection; etc. As with any infection, you may have a fever and feel generally unwell.

Are any tests needed?

Tests to look for infecting bacteria may be done. For example, a urine test may be taken if a urine infection appears to be the root cause. If you have a urethral discharge then a sample of the discharge may be taken. An ultrasound scan of the scrotum will often be performed either at the time of the infection or in the weeks after it. This helps to exclude other causes of a swollen testicle.

What is the treatment for epididymo-orchitis?

Antibiotics are usually given as soon as epididymo-orchitis is diagnosed. It is common to need antibiotics for four to six weeks. These normally work well, and full recovery is usual within two to three weeks but it is important to complete the course to ensure all the bacteria are killed.

Antibiotics do not kill viruses and they are not needed if a viral cause is confirmed.

You may find that supporting underwear helps to ease the pain. It is sensible to rest as much as possible for the first ten days. Painkillers such as paracetamol and ibuprofen will also ease the pain.

Are there any complications from epididymo-orchitis?

An abscess (ball of infection with pus) in the scrotum occasionally develops. This may need a small operation to drain the pus.

Mumps epididymo-orchitis can sometimes cause reduced fertility in the affected testis. A rare complication of epididymo-orchitis is chronic testicular pain.

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Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further Information

For general queries about epididymo-orchitis telephone the Urology Centre

Tel: 0151 282 6797 or 0151 282 6877

Text phone number: 18001 0151 282 6797 / 18001 0151 282 6877

For clinical questions specific to your case, telephone the secretary of your Urology Consultant

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