

DESCRIPTION

An inflammation and infection of the epididymis. These are thin-walled tubes at the top of a man's testicles. They carry sperm from the testicles to the vas deferens. The vas deferens is another tube that carries the sperm from the testicle to the prostate before ejaculation. Epididymitis more often affects men ages 19 to 35.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Pain, heat, redness, and swelling at the back or top of one or both testicles.
- Pain or burning with urination.
- Fever and chills.
- Discharge from the penis (sometimes).

CAUSES

- Infection in the urinary tract or the prostate.
- Amiodarone (a heart drug).
- A whole body infection that spreads through the bloodstream to the epididymis.
- Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).
- Intense exercise, such as heavy lifting.
- Sometimes, no cause is found.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Recent urethral or urinary tract infection.
- Unsafe sexual practices that lead to STDs.
- Presence of foreskin (being uncircumcised).
- Abnormalities or recent surgery involving the genitals or urinary tract.
- Catheter (use of tube to carry urine from the body).

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Practice safe sex or abstain from sexual activity.
- Practice good hygiene, especially if uncircumcised.
- Avoid catheters if possible.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Usually curable with treatment. Pain often goes away in 1 to 3 days. Complete healing may take several weeks.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Abscess (pus-filled area).
- Infection of the testicles spreads into bloodstream or rarely a severe scrotal infection.
- May become sterile if untreated.
- The disorder may become chronic.

GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider will do an examination of the genitals. Medical tests usually include urine or discharge studies to check for bacteria or sexually transmitted diseases. Blood studies or ultrasound may also be done.
- The goal of treatment is to cure the infection and reduce pain and swelling. Treatment can usually be done at home with rest, drugs, and self-care.
- Support the weight of the scrotum and tender testicles. Roll a soft bath towel and place it between the legs under the inflamed area.
- Apply an ice bag (wrapped in a cloth) to the inflamed parts to help reduce swelling and relieve pain. Do this for 10 to 15 minutes at a time several times a day. Don't use heat.
- Wear an athletic supporter or two pairs of athletic briefs when you return to normal activity.
- Surgery may be recommended in cases of blockage or narrowing of the urethra, or for an abscess.

MEDICATIONS

- Antibiotics will be prescribed for infection. They may be given orally or by injection.
- Stronger pain-relieving medications may be prescribed for moderate to severe pain.
- Stool softeners may be used to prevent constipation.

Your doctor also recommends the following over-the-counter medications. These medications may offer significant symptom relief:

- For fever or pain use ibuprofen or naproxen.
- Unless your doctor tells you differently, always finish the full course of your antibiotic prescription, even if you start to feel better.

ACTIVITY

Rest in bed until fever, pain, and swelling improve. Don't engage in sexual intercourse. Wait at least 1 month (or as advised) after all symptoms disappear before resuming sexual relations.

DIET

Eat natural laxative foods, such as prunes, fresh fruit, whole-grain cereals, and nuts to prevent constipation.

SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION IF

- Pain is not relieved by treatment.
- You develop severe scrotal pain, urinary pain or a discharge, fever, chills, or you become constipated.