



Epididymitis: An Infection in the Male Reproductive System

What it is and how it is treated

This handout explains epididymitis and how it is treated.

What is epididymitis?

Epididymitis (ep-ih-did-ih-my-tis) is an inflammation of the *epididymis*, an oblong structure that is attached to the upper part of each testicle (see the picture on page 2). Sometimes the inflammation is so great that the testicle feels very enlarged and hard. But, this does not mean the testicle itself is infected.

What causes epididymitis?

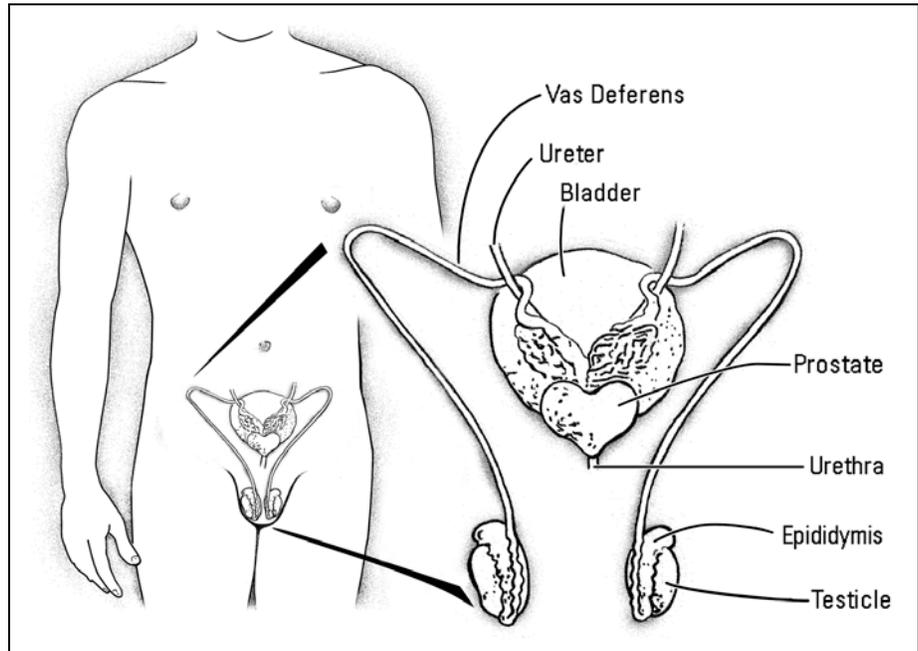
The epididymis can become inflamed for many reasons:

Bacterial Infection

- Bacterial infections are the most common and the most serious cause of epididymitis. We test urine or prostate secretions to identify the germ (bacteria) that causes epididymitis.
- Bacterial epididymitis is usually caused by an infection that spreads to the epididymis from other male *urogenital* organs (prostate, bladder, kidney, and urethra). Antibiotics are used to treat bacterial infections.
- Epididymitis may be a complication of a urinary tract infection.

Injury to the Scrotum

- Epididymitis may also be caused by injury to the scrotum. Trauma that may cause epididymitis includes bumping during transfers or sitting on the testicles for a long time. In this type of epididymitis, there will likely not be fever, chills, and other symptoms.



The epididymis is located on the upper part of each testicle.

What are the symptoms of epididymitis?

Symptoms of epididymitis include:

- Fever and chills.
- General weakness and *autonomic dysreflexia* (AD), a condition that can occur after some spinal cord injuries.
- Redness, swelling, and intense pain in your scrotum and epididymis. The discomfort usually comes on quickly, less than 24 hours after you first have symptoms.

Treatment Guidelines

Follow these guidelines for treatment. Call your health care provider if you have any questions or concerns.

- Take your temperature in the morning and at night. Write down the results. Call your health care provider if you have a fever higher than 100°F (37.8°C).
- When you are in bed, support your scrotum and tender testicles. Put a rolled-up, soft bath towel between your legs beneath the inflamed parts. When you are able to be up and about again, you will be most comfortable if you wear underwear.
- Drink plenty of fluids, but limit alcohol. There are no restrictions on what you may eat.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns.

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- Anti-inflammatory medicine can be very helpful in epididymitis. Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, and others) is used most often, but other medicines may work as well or better, and they will not upset your stomach. Talk with your health care provider about taking an anti-inflammatory medicine.
- Complete your full course of antibiotics as prescribed. You may have to take them longer than you would take them for other kinds of infections.
- Some swelling and hardness around the testicles may continue after the pain and tenderness have improved. Be extra careful to avoid injury to the infected area for 2 to 3 months after all signs of inflammation are gone.

Call Your Doctor If:

- You have a fever higher than 100°F (37.8°C).
- Your pain is not well-controlled.
- Your symptoms do not get better in 4 days.
- You become very constipated.

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