Epididymitis –
Infection in the Male Reproductive System

Information and treatment guidelines

About Epididymitis

Epididymitis (ep-ih-did-ih-my-tis) is an inflammation of the epididymis, an oblong structure attached to the upper part of each testicle. Sometimes the inflammation is so great that the testicle itself feels greatly enlarged and hardened. This does not mean the testicle is infected, however.

- The epididymis can become inflamed for many reasons. Bacterial infections are the most common and the most serious of the causes.
- Most times bacterial epididymitis results from an infection spreading to the epididymis from other male urogenital organs (prostate, bladder, kidney, and urethra). Epididymitis may complicate an infection or be brought on by injury to the scrotum.
- The germ causing the infection can be identified by smears or cultures of the urine or secretions from the prostate.
- Epididymitis is not contagious, inherited, nor a sign of cancer.
- Symptoms include fever, chills, general weakness, redness, swelling and intense pain of the scrotum and epididymis. The onset of the discomfort is usually quick – most times less than 24 hours.
- Antibiotics are used to treat bacterial infections.
- Tuberculosis, a more rare type of bacteria, can spread to the epididymis. This type of infection develops very slowly over days and weeks.
• Non-bacterial epididymitis is caused by a virus, trauma, or an unknown cause (called idiopathic). It can be just as painful and have a very quick onset.

• With the viral type you may feel weak, ill and have a fever.

• With epididymitis caused by trauma or an idiopathic reason there will likely not be fever, chills and other symptoms. Many believe these types are caused by a rupture or blowout of the sperm ducts causing a leakage of sperm fluid into the tissue. Body tissues can be quite irritated by this leakage, causing the redness and swelling. Sometimes non-bacterial epididymitis is treated with antibiotics just to prevent bacteria from infecting the area where resistance has been weakened.

**Treatment Guidelines**

Follow these guidelines for treatment and call your doctor if you have any questions or concerns.

• Take your temperature at morning and at night. Keep a record.

• Stay in bed. Do not get out of bed except for bowel movements until the swelling subsides and the fever is gone. When you are on your feet, the scrotum hangs down and is constantly being bumped by walking and moving. This doesn’t allow the infection to drain out.

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

Call 206-598-4295

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC Clinic staff are also available to help at any time.

Rehabilitation Clinic
206-598-4295

- While in bed, support the weight of the scrotum and tender testicles by rolling a soft bath towel and placing it between your legs beneath the inflamed parts. When you are able to be up and about again, you will be more comfortable wearing a jock strap or two pairs of briefs for support.

- While in bed, apply either ice or heat (warm compresses, electric heating pad, hot water bottle) to the inflamed parts. Use whichever gives the most comfort. If you have decreased sensation, be very careful using heat, to prevent burning yourself.

- There are no restrictions on what you may eat. Drink plenty of fluids, but limit alcohol.

- Anti-inflammatory medicine can be very helpful in epididymitis. Ibuprofen is the most common, but other medicines may work as well or better without the stomach upset. Talk to your doctor about taking an anti-inflammatory.

- Do not take any medicine, not even medicine you buy without a prescription, without telling your doctor. If drugs are prescribed, carefully follow the instructions on the label.

- Note that after the pain and tenderness have subsided that a certain amount of swelling and hardness around the testicle may continue. This will disappear more quickly if you sit in warm water for 15 minutes twice a day. Be careful to avoid injury to the infected area for 2 to 3 months after all signs of inflammation have subsided.

Call Your Doctor If:

- Your oral temperature is over 100°F.

- Pain is not well controlled.

- Your symptoms do not improve in 4 days.

- You become severely constipated.