

Epididymo-orchitis - the basics

It is a condition affecting men characterised by pain and swelling inside the scrotum (ball bag) and is due to an infection either in the:

epididymis – tube carrying the sperm from the testicle to the vas deferens and then the urethra or water pipe (epididymitis)

testicle (orchitis)

epididymis and testicle (epididymo-orchitis)

In men under the age of 35 years it is usually caused by a sexually transmitted infection (STI) in the water pipe e.g. chlamydia or gonorrhoea.

Prompt medical assessment is needed to make sure you don't have a twisted testicle (testicular torsion) as this can result in long term damage to the testicle if not dealt with quickly.

If you have epididymo-orchitis we recommend that you should have routine tests for all sexually transmitted infections including chlamydia, gonorrhoea, syphilis and HIV.

Epididymo-orchitis is easily treated with antibiotics, painkillers and rest but the pain frequently takes weeks to months to totally settle.

How common is epididymo-orchitis?

It occurs most commonly in men aged 19- 40 years.

How do you catch epididymo-orchitis?

In men under the age of 35 years the most common cause is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) such as chlamydia or gonorrhoea with local spread from the water pipe.

In men over the age of 35 years the most common cause is a urine infection – with local spread of infection from the bladder. This may also occur after surgical procedures such as cystoscopy or catheterisation.

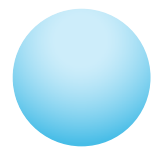
Occasionally it may also be due to a 'gut' bacterial infection from insertive anal intercourse.

Rarely epididymo-orchitis may be caused by other infections such as mumps or tuberculosis.

What would I notice if I had epididymo-orchitis?

A rapid onset of pain and swelling in one or sometimes both of your testicles.

Some men may also notice a discharge from the tip of the water pipe and/or pain on passing urine.



Occasionally you may feel generally unwell with a fever.

How do I get tested for epididymo-orchitis?

Epididymo-orchitis is diagnosed by a medical assessment, sexual health screen and urine test. It is treated immediately at your first visit to the clinic.

If there is any concern about a possible torsion of the testicles you will be referred immediately to Accident and Emergency for further assessment and investigations.

How epididymo-orchitis treated?

Epididymo-orchitis is treated with antibiotics to cover the most likely infections. This may include an injection as well as tablet treatment.

All treatments at sexual health clinics are free and given to you in the clinic.

You will be advised to rest, wear a scrotal support and take regular painkillers such as ibuprofen (do not take if allergic to aspirin) or paracetamol.

If your symptoms get worse or fail to improve within 3 days you should re-attend the clinic or seek further medical advice.

Testicular pain and swelling frequently takes many weeks or months to completely settle following treatment.

What about my partner?

If you have been diagnosed with an STI then all recent partners need to have a full sexual health screen and antibiotic treatment. Your clinic will advise you further about this.

When can I have sex again?

You must not have sex again until both you and your partners have each completed the antibiotics prescribed.

What happens if my epididymo-orchitis is left untreated?

The testicular pain and swelling will last much longer.

Untreated infection is more likely to lead to complications such as:

- Long term testicular pain
- An abscess
- Rarely shrinkage of the testicle and loss of fertility

Epididymo-orchitis

More information: <http://www.bashh.org/guidelines>

This leaflet was produced by the Clinical Effectiveness Group of the British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH)
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