

Epididymitis

What is epididymitis?

Epididymitis is an inflammation (irritation and swelling) of the epididymis. The epididymis is the firm tube at the back of each testicle. This coiled tube stores and carries sperm. One or both testicles may be affected, but it usually happens on just 1 side. The inflammation causes pain and swelling.

What is the cause?

Epididymitis can be caused by bacterial infections, such as:

- Urinary tract infections
- Sexually transmitted diseases such as chlamydia or gonorrhea
- Infection of the prostate gland
- Tuberculosis (TB)

It may also happen if you have:

- Surgery to remove the prostate
- A medical procedure involving your urinary tract, such as cystoscopy or a urinary catheter

Sometimes men have epididymitis when they are taking a heart rhythm medicine called amiodarone.

What are the symptoms?

Possible symptoms are:

- Red, warm skin on the scrotum
- Tender, swollen testicle or scrotum
- Discharge from the urethra (the opening at the end of the penis)
- Pain or burning when you urinate
- Pain with sex, including with orgasm
- Lump in a testicle
- Discomfort in your lower abdomen, flank, or pelvis
- Blood in the semen
- Fever and chills
- Nausea

How is it diagnosed?

Your healthcare provider will examine your groin and scrotum. You may have a rectal exam. You may also have these tests:

- Urine tests
- Tests for chlamydia and gonorrhea

- Blood tests
- Testicular scan

How is it treated?

Your healthcare provider may prescribe antibiotic medicine. Your sexual partner may need to be treated at the same time to prevent reinfection if a sexually-transmitted disease is suspected or diagnosed. Your provider may prescribe another medicine for pain and inflammation. Sometimes severe cases need surgery.

If you have an infection, it is very important to have a follow-up visit with your healthcare provider to make sure the infection is completely cleared up.

How long do the effects last?

The pain usually gets better in 1 to 3 days. If it is caused by a bacterial infection, the symptoms may come back if antibiotics do not kill all of the bacteria. Symptoms may also come back if bacteria from the urinary tract or from sexual contact reinfect the epididymis. If this happens, you will need more treatment with antibiotics. It is important to treat the infection completely to try to prevent chronic epididymitis and to keep the infection from spreading to the testicle. Spread of the infection to the testicles could make you infertile (unable to have children).

Chronic epididymitis is more of a problem. Why some men get chronic epididymitis is not known. Chronic means that the infection continues even after treatment or that the infection or symptoms similar to infection return frequently. The discomfort or pain of chronic epididymitis can be treated with antibiotics or anti-inflammatory medicine. If antibiotics and pain medicine do not help, surgery to remove the epididymis may be necessary.

How can I take care of myself?

- Take all of the medicine prescribed by your healthcare provider.
- Follow your provider's instructions.
- If you are very uncomfortable, you may need to rest in bed for a couple of days.
- Raise the scrotum by putting a rolled-up towel under it when you are resting.
- Use a cloth-covered ice pack to help relieve the pain. Do not leave the ice pack on your skin for longer than 20 minutes and do not use it more often than once every hour.
- Wear an athletic supporter or jockey shorts instead of boxers to help relieve discomfort.
- If you have an infection, don't have sex until the infection clears up.
- Ask your provider:
 - How and when you will hear your test results
 - How long it will take to recover

- What activities you should avoid and when you can return to your normal activities
- How to take care of yourself at home
- What symptoms or problems you should watch for and what to do if you have them
- Make sure you know when you should come back for a checkup.

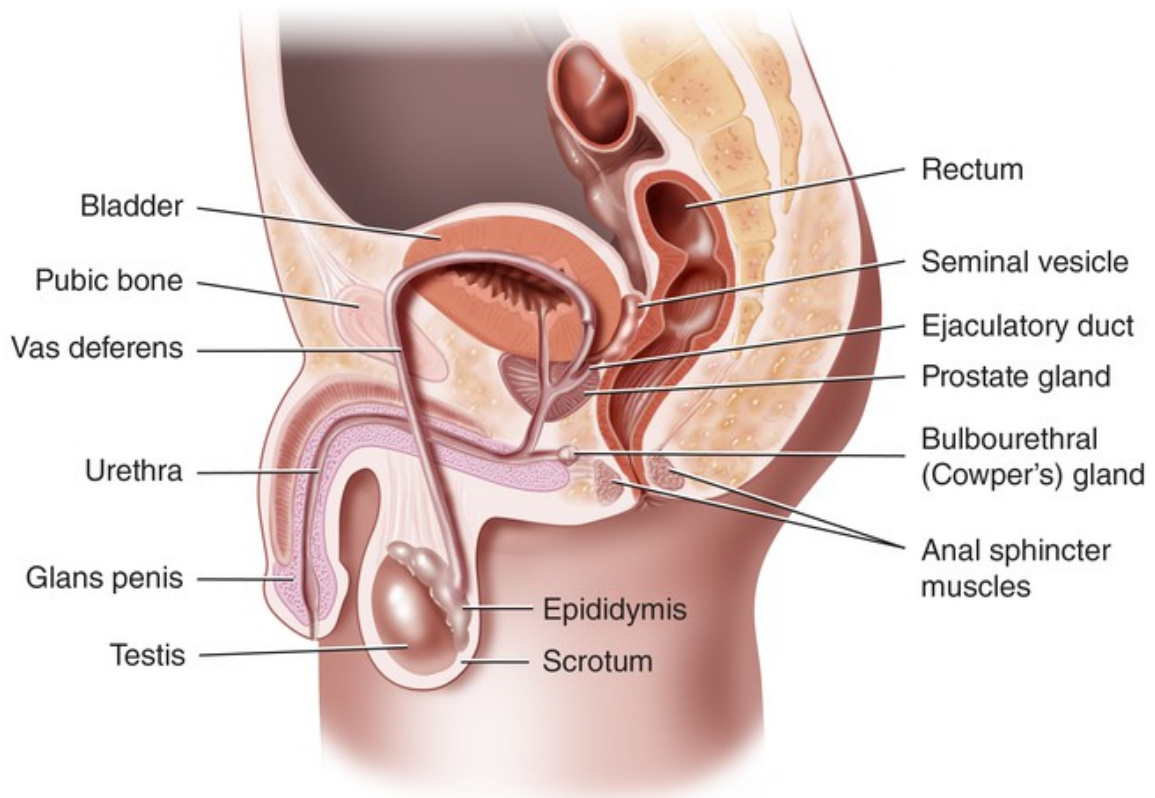
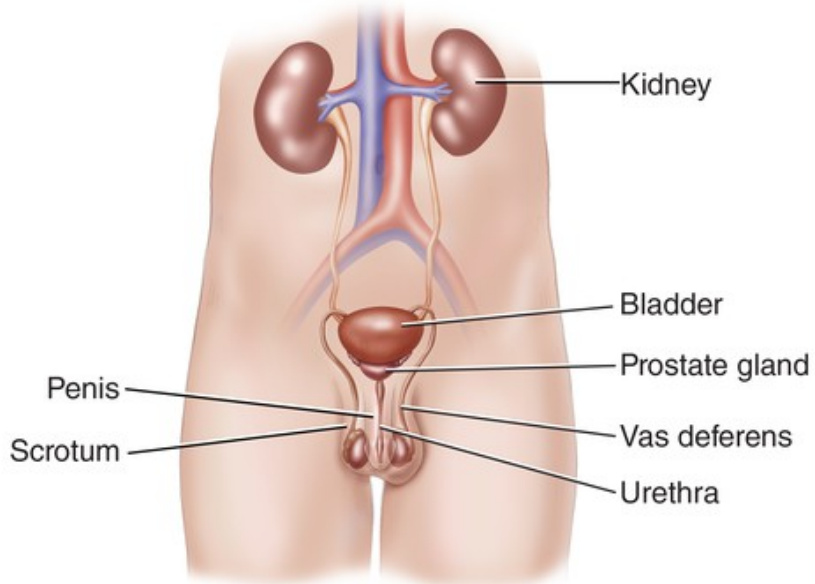
How can I help prevent epididymitis?

- Keep the penis and scrotum clean.
- If you have symptoms of burning when you urinate or a discharge from the penis, see your healthcare provider promptly.
- Have just one sex partner.
- Use a latex or polyurethane condom every time you have sex to protect against sexually transmitted diseases.

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Male Pelvis



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