WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT AN ORCHIECTOMY

(The following information is based on the general experiences of many prostate cancer patients. Your experience may be different.)

After you decide to have an orchiectomy, you may feel a little scared, but after you learn more about this operation, you may feel less afraid about it.

What is an Orchiectomy?

An orchiectomy (or-key-ech-toe-me) is an operation to remove your testicles. Your testicles are the two firm, round tissues (often called “balls”) in your scrotum. Your testicles make most of the testosterone (male hormone) in your body. An orchiectomy stops this testosterone from being made.
Why Does An Orchiectomy Help Prostate Cancer?

Hormones are produced by glands in your body and carried by your blood to all areas in your body. Hormones do many different things in your body. The male hormone called testosterone makes you grow hair on your face and body, have a man’s body shape, and controls your desire for sex. Testosterone is made mainly in your testicles. A small amount of testosterone is also made by your adrenal glands. Your adrenal glands are located on top of each kidney and they produce several different kinds of hormones.

When you have prostate cancer, testosterone feeds the cancer and helps it to grow. So, it is important to lower the amount of testosterone in your body. An orchiectomy lowers the amount of testosterone in your body. Lowering the amount of testosterone can make your prostate cancer shrink or grow more slowly. If you are having bone pain from the cancer, an orchiectomy may help your pain get better. Lowering the amount of testosterone in your body will not cure prostate cancer, but it will slow it down.

Are There Other Ways to Decrease Testosterone?

Yes. There are medicines that lower the amount of testosterone in your body the same way that removing your testicles lowers your testosterone (See IMPACT brochure
“Hormone Therapy and You”). If you would like more information about this kind of treatment, ask your doctor and your nurse case manager.

**What Is The Surgery Like?**

An orchiectomy is quite simple. It is usually done as an outpatient procedure. This means that you will not have to stay overnight in the hospital.

**What Should I Do Before I Go To The Hospital?**

Your doctor will tell you what time to be at the hospital. Even though your doctor will make sure you are ready to leave the hospital after your surgery, it is a good idea to make plans for a family member or friend to help you when you go home. Make sure to tell your doctor if you are taking any medications, vitamins, or herbs before your surgery.

**What Will Happen the Day I Have My Operation?**

**When You Get To The Hospital**

1. When you get to the hospital, a member of the hospital staff will check you in.

2. If a family member or friend is with you, the staff will show them where to wait.
3. Ask about anything that you do not understand or that worries you.

**Before Your Operation**

1. A hospital staff member will get you ready for your operation. An anesthesiologist will talk to you. An anesthesiologist is the doctor who puts you to sleep and carefully watches you during the operation. The anesthesiologist may give you a local anesthetic or general anesthesia. A local anesthetic is medicine that numbs your body so that you do not feel the operation. General anesthesia is when you are given medicine to help you sleep during your operation. Your doctor will recommend the best anesthesia for you. You will not feel anything until after your surgery with either type of anesthesia.

2. Ask the anesthesiologist about anything that you do not understand or that worries you.

**During Your Operation**

1. Your doctor will make a small incision (cut) in your scrotum (the sack that holds your testicles).

2. The testicles will be removed.

3. Your doctor will then sew your scrotum back up.
After Your Operation

1. After your operation is over you will go to the recovery room. You will stay there until you are totally awake. This may take a few hours. The recovery room nurses will watch you very closely until you wake up.

2. After you leave the recovery room, you will move to the outpatient day unit.

What You Will See When The Operation is Over

1. Your surgical wound (incision or cut) made by the surgeon will be held together with stitches until it heals. The stitches will stay in when you go home. Most likely, you will have stitches that will dissolve or go away on their own. If not, you will be told when to see your doctor to have them taken out.

2. You will have a plastic tube going into a vein in your arm. It is connected to a plastic bag of liquid. This is your I.V. The I.V. gives you any fluids you need. You may also be given medicine in your I.V. Your I.V. will be taken out when you can drink and eat without problems.

What Can I Expect After The Surgery?

Your scrotum may swell or become larger after surgery. You should put ice packs on your scrotum for the first 48 hours after your surgery to help keep the swelling down. Make sure to put a towel or piece of cloth around your ice pack before putting it on your scrotum. Ice cubes in small plastic bags make good ice packs.
You should keep the incision (cut) made for the operation clean and dry. If your doctor gives you an ointment or cream to put on the cut, be sure to use it as you were told. Call your Nurse case manager if you have any questions about taking care of your scrotum after the surgery.

You should not lift anything heavy for 2 weeks after your surgery.

You will find that your scrotum may not look the same after the testicles have been removed. It may not seem as full.

Call your doctor or Nurse case manager right away if you:

- See increasing redness around the incision (cut).
- Have increasing pain around the incision (cut) or scrotum. There should be only a small amount of pain at the incision (cut) after your operation, and it should get better each day.
- See any yellowish drainage that looks like pus coming from the incision (cut).
- Start to have a temperature or fever.
- Have any questions or concerns about how you are healing.
Are there side effects?

Yes, there may be, but your doctor and Nurse case manager can help you find ways to manage them.

You may find that you are less interested in sex after having an orchiectomy. This is because there is less testosterone in your body. If you have this side effect, it is important to talk with your sex partner about this. It can be a difficult side effect for both of you. Make sure to share caring and concern with your sex partner.

Sometimes, it is helpful to talk to a counselor if you feel down about your lack of interest in sex. You may want to talk to your Nurse case manager. Counseling is provided by IMPACT.

Also, many men have erectile dysfunction after the surgery. This means that your penis may not be able to become hard enough (an erection) for sex. This may be troublesome for you. You may feel less manly or worry about your intimate partner.

There are ways to treat erectile dysfunction (See IMPACT brochure “Erectile Dysfunction and You”). You may want to talk to your Nurse case manager or your doctor about them. Also, talk with your partner. There may be ways that you can be intimate without having sex. Counseling is available through IMPACT if you need it. Please talk to your Nurse case manager about any concerns or worries.
Some men have hot flashes like the ones that women have during menopause (the change of life). If you have them, they may feel like a sudden spread of warmth in your face, neck, and chest. You may sweat. Hot flashes can be uncomfortable, but they may be controlled with medicines. If the hot flashes bother you, ask your doctor or Nurse case manager about the medicine that can help you with this side effect.

You may find that your feelings change a lot or you may feel depressed. This can be because there is less testosterone in your body. You may also feel sad or angry because you have prostate cancer or because you have had an orchiectomy. You may want to talk to your doctor and Nurse case manager about your feelings. If the depression does not go away, and there are changes in how you sleep and eat, or it is hard for you to enjoy things, there are treatments that can help. Again, talk about these things with your Nurse case manager and doctor.

You may also feel more tired than usual. This may be caused by lower testosterone or anemia (fewer red blood cells to take oxygen to your cells). There are medications to treat anemia. You can also plan your activities with rest periods. When there is something that you really want to do, make sure you take a good rest before. Also, rest when you are tired. However, it is important to maintain activity, like short walks, as much as you can. Do not push yourself when you are very tired. Talk to your Nurse case manager about ways you can deal with tiredness.
You will need to be more careful of your bones. Bones can become weaker after an orchiectomy. You can prevent this from becoming a problem by doing weight-bearing exercises such as walking, climbing stairs, carrying groceries. Weight-bearing exercises improve bone health for many reasons.

1. It helps your bones to form.

2. It makes stronger those muscles that are used to pull or tug on bones. This helps keep bones strong. And,

3. Exercise helps your strength, balance, and coordination that will lower your chance of falls and bone injuries.

You do not need special weights to do these exercises. Carrying or lifting soup cans, telephone books, or bags of flour or sugar are weight-bearing exercises. You should start lifting with lighter weights and gradually move to heavier ones. It is especially good for your bones if you can do an exercise walk for 20 minutes a day. Remember to speak with your doctor before beginning an exercise program.
**Weight-Bearing Exercises**

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<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
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<td>• Walking</td>
<td>• Walking Uphill</td>
<td>• Walking with Weighted Vest</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Square Dancing</td>
<td>• Race Walking</td>
<td>• Walking with Backpack</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Yoga</td>
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<td>• Weight Lifting</td>
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<td>• Baseball/Softball</td>
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**Key:**

Initial /Beginner = **Start** one or more of these activities on a regular basis.

Moderate = **Increase** your load, intensity and time of physical activity. Do more, more often

Advanced = **Challenge** yourself to keep increasing your load, intensity and time of physical activities.

Your doctor may give you medicine to help your bones get stronger if that is what is needed. You may also want to eat foods that have calcium like milk and cheese.

Calcium helps your bones stay strong.

Remember, your doctor and Nurse case manager can help you deal with any side effects you may have from an orchiectomy.