

# The Male Reproductive System

**BIG IDEA** The purpose of the male reproductive organs is to protect, store, and help move the sperm.

## FUNCTIONS OF THE MALE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM

**MAIN IDEA** The male reproductive system includes organs that allow physically mature males to produce children.

Justin has questions about what he's going through during adolescence. His body is changing, and his moods change all of the time. He is embarrassed to talk to his mom about "guy" problems, but he wants to talk to her about what he is feeling.

The male reproductive system produces **sperm**. Sperm *are the male reproductive cells*. Sperm are stored in the epididymis, a network of tubes located behind the testes. The **testes** or testicles, *are the reproductive glands that produce sperm*. Each sperm can join with a female reproductive cell (egg) and make another human. Males begin to make sperm cells between the ages of 12 and 15.

The testes produce sperm. The testes are located in the **scrotum**, which is *a pouch of skin that holds the testes*.

The function of the scrotum is to keep the testes at the right temperature to produce sperm. The scrotum accomplishes this task by holding the testes close to the body when cold, or further from the body when warm.

**Males begin to make sperm cells between the ages of 12 and 15.**

When sperm leave the epididymis, they pass through the vas deferens. From there, the sperm mix with secretions from the seminal vesicles, the prostate gland, and the Cowper's glands. This *mixture of fluids and sperm* is called **semen**.

The semen is released from the urethra through the penis. The body's release of semen is called an **ejaculation**, *a series of forceful muscular contractions*. Each time an ejaculation occurs, 3 to 4 million sperm cells are released.



### Before You Read

**QUICK WRITE** Do you plan to have children when you become an adult? How do you picture your family life when you are older?

Video

### As You Read

**STUDY ORGANIZER** Make the study organizer on page 63 to record the information presented in Lesson 2.

### Vocabulary

- > sperm
- > testes
- > scrotum
- > semen
- > ejaculation
- > erection
- > hernia

Audio

Bilingual Glossary

### What Teens Want to Know

**Is it normal for boys to develop larger breasts during puberty?** About 65 percent of males develop gynecomastia, or slightly enlarged breasts, during puberty. This happens most commonly by age 14, and the cause is a temporary hormonal imbalance. This condition is temporary and will go away.



## Erection

Most of the time, the penis is soft. When blood flow to its blood vessels increases, however, an erection results. In an **erection**, the penis becomes upright and firm. When the penis is erect, ejaculation can occur. Ejaculation is the release of semen from the penis.

A male may have an erection at any time – and for no reason. Erections are a normal part of being a male. They are not necessarily followed by an ejaculation. After an erection, the penis becomes soft again.

## Wet Dreams

Teen males sometimes experience erections and ejaculate while they are asleep. These are called nocturnal (night-time) emissions, or wet dreams. A male has no control over whether a wet dream happens. Some teen males will have wet dreams and some will not.

Why do wet dreams occur? They result from a buildup of fluids in the reproductive glands. Although adult males can also have them, wet dreams are much more common in teen males going through puberty and producing sperm for the first time.

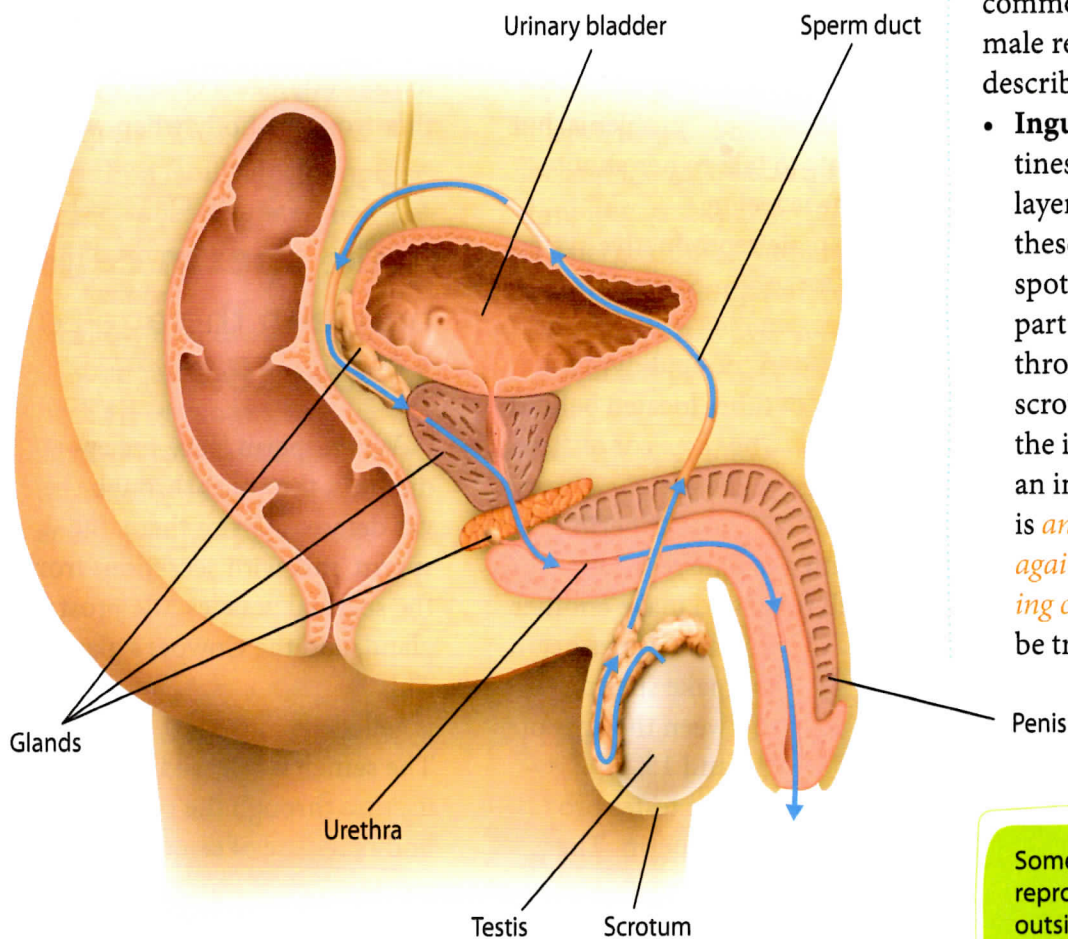
Wet dreams are one way the body has of releasing the built-up pressure of semen and other fluids. It frees the body to make more sperm.

## Male Health Concerns

Before birth, a male's testes are up inside his body. Once he is born, they descend, or come down, into the scrotum. Occasionally, one or both testes fail to descend. This condition, called an undescended testicle, can be cured with surgery.

Other problems of the male reproductive system may also require medical help. Some common problems of the male reproductive system are described below.

- **Inguinal hernia.** The intestines are held in place by a layer of muscles. Sometimes these muscles have a weak spot due to muscle strain. A part of the intestine may push through the weak spot into the scrotum or into the area above the inner thigh. This is called an inguinal hernia. A **hernia** is an internal organ pushing against or through a surrounding cavity wall. A hernia can be treated through surgery.



Some parts of the male reproductive system are located outside the body, while others are inside the body. *Explain the function of the testes.*

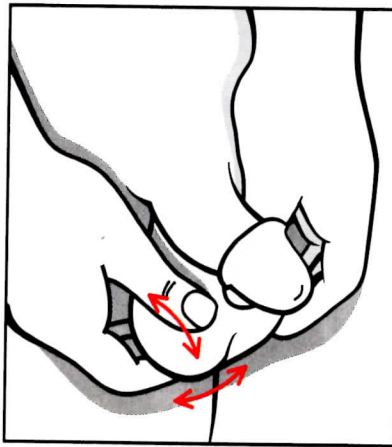


- **Testicular cancer.** This is one of the most curable forms of cancer. Symptoms may include a lump or swelling of the testicles, and pain or tenderness in the testicles, abdomen, or groin. It is the most common cancer of males aged 14 to 34. A lump can be detected through self-examination. Early detection is essential for successful treatment. A testicular self-exam should be performed regularly to check for lumps.
- **Testicular torsion.** Within the scrotum, the testicles are held in place by a structure called the spermatic cord. Sometimes, the cord becomes twisted around a testicle. Blood flow is cut off to the testicle, causing pain, swelling, or tenderness. Immediate treatment is necessary.
- **Prostate cancer.** The tissue of the prostate gland can become cancerous. This condition is more common in older men. This cancer can be treated through surgery, radiation treatment, or chemotherapy.
- **Sterility.** This problem occurs in males who produce too few sperm or if the sperm are weak. Sterility can be caused by untreated STDs or exposure to pesticides, lead, or dangerous amounts of radiation, such as X rays. Certain drugs can also cause sterility. Some types of sterility can be treated with medications or by undergoing surgery.

## Caring for the Male Reproductive System

Males can take the following steps to care for their reproductive systems.

- Do a testicular self-examination every month. Choose a time when the scrotum is relaxed, usually after a shower or bath. Roll each testicle between the thumb and fingers of both hands. Report unusual lumps to your doctor.
- Bathe regularly. Males who have not been circumcised should pull the fold of skin back and wash under it.
- Wear an athletic supporter or cup, when participating in contact sports.
- Get regular physical checkups.
- Avoid wearing tight clothing.
- Abstain from sexual activity to protect yourself from STDs and unplanned pregnancy.



Males between the ages of 15 and 34 should check for lumps once a month. *Explain why it is important to do a testicular self-exam.*

## LESSON 2

# REVIEW

### After You Read


1. **DEFINE** What is *sperm*?
2. **DESCRIBE** Describe two problems that affect the male reproductive system.
3. **IDENTIFY** Name 3 steps that both males and females can take to care for their reproductive systems.

### Thinking Critically

4. **DISTINGUISH** What is the difference between semen and sperm?
5. **COMPARE AND CONTRAST** How might a male's reproductive health concerns change at different periods of his life?

### Applying Health Skills

6. **ACCESSING INFORMATION** Using print or online resources, research how a testicular or a pelvic exam is done. When should these exams be performed? Why are they important?

 Review

 Audio