DR. CHIRAG GUPTA | UROLOGY & ANDROLOGY

Varicocele

Understanding enlarged veins around the testicle and treatment choices

A practical guide to help you prepare for a conversation with your urologist. Your own care plan may differ.

What is a varicocele?

A varicocele is an enlargement of veins in the scrotum, similar to varicose veins. It is more common on the left side. Many varicoceles cause no symptoms and do not need treatment. Some people have a dull ache or heaviness, testicular size concerns, or fertility questions.

How is it assessed?

Assessment usually includes a medical history and physical examination. The clinician may examine you standing and lying down. Ultrasound or semen analysis may be recommended when it will help answer a clinical question or guide fertility planning. A varicocele is only one part of a fertility assessment.

Treatment options

Observation may be appropriate when there are no bothersome symptoms or other reasons to treat. Supportive underwear or clinician-approved pain relief may help discomfort. If treatment is recommended, options can include surgery to close the affected veins or catheter-based embolization. Treatment choice depends on symptoms, examination, fertility goals and individual factors.

What to consider

Treatment may improve pain or semen measures for some patients, but benefits vary and fertility or pregnancy cannot be guaranteed. Possible problems include persistence or recurrence, fluid around the testicle (hydrocele), infection or bleeding; injury to the testicular artery is rare. Ask about the expected recovery and follow-up plan for the option being considered.

When to seek medical advice

Arrange medical assessment for a new testicular lump, persistent pain, swelling or a change in testicular size. Sudden severe testicular pain needs urgent medical care. After treatment, contact your team for fever, worsening pain, marked swelling, wound redness or discharge.

Questions to discuss

Does my varicocele need treatment? How might it relate to my symptoms or fertility tests? What are the benefits and risks of observation, surgery and embolization in my case? When should tests be repeated?

Sources for further reading

• Urology Care Foundation - Varicoceles

This handout is general educational information, not a diagnosis or a substitute for advice from your treating clinician. Do not change prescribed medicines or treatment based only on this document. Ask your care team for instructions specific to you.