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The Royal Liverpool  
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## Patient information

# Hydrocele

## Urology Speciality

A hydrocele is a collection of fluid in the scrotum. Most develop for no apparent reason, are harmless, and can be left alone. A small operation can cure the problem if needed. In a small number of cases, a hydrocele is due to an underlying problem with a testis.

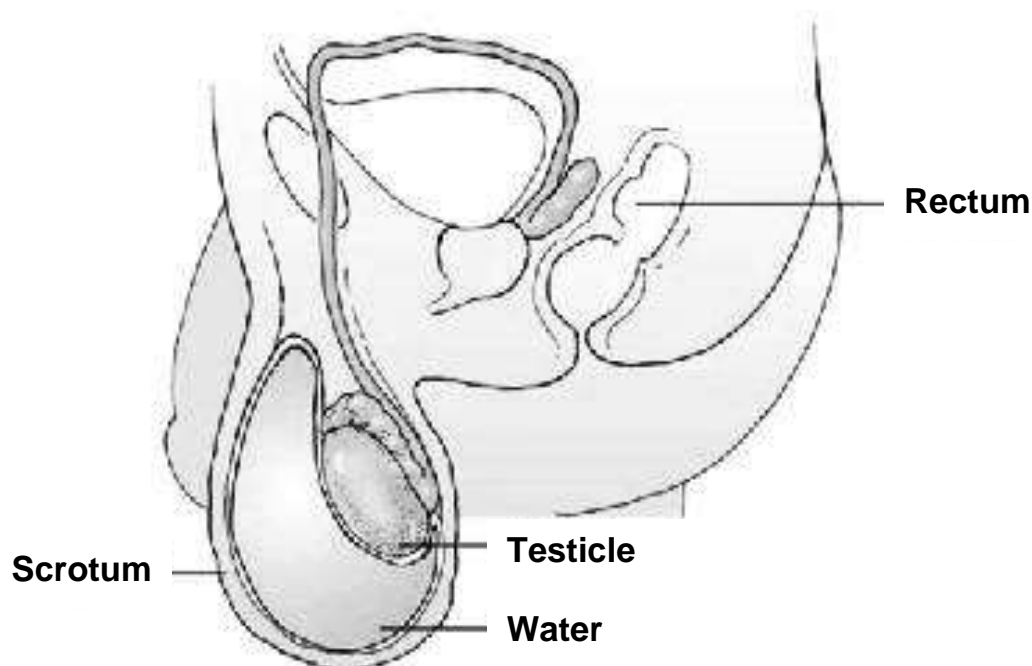
### The normal scrotum and testes

The scrotum is normally loose, soft, and fleshy. It holds the two testes. Usually you can easily feel the testes in the scrotum. A tube (the vas) takes sperm from each testis to the penis. It is normal for one testis (testicle) to hang lower than the other.

### What is a hydrocele?

A hydrocele is a collection of fluid in a sac in the scrotum around a testis. It usually occurs on one side, but sometimes a hydrocele forms around both testes.

The normal testis is surrounded by a smooth protective tissue sac. You cannot normally feel this. It makes a small amount of 'lubricating' fluid to allow the testes to move freely. Excess fluid normally drains away into the veins in the scrotum. If the balance is altered between the amount of fluid that is made, and the amount that is drained, some fluid accumulates as a hydrocele.



## What do hydroceles look and feel like?

A hydrocele feels like a fluid filled balloon inside the scrotum, and makes the testis difficult to feel. They vary greatly in size. Very large hydroceles are sometimes seen in elderly men who have never shown their swelling to a doctor. It might have been getting larger over a number of years. Hydroceles are normally painless. Large hydroceles may cause discomfort because of their size. Walking or sexual activity may become uncomfortable if you have a very large hydrocele.

## What causes hydroceles?

Most hydroceles occur in adults and are most common in older men.

- The cause is not known in most cases.
- A small number of hydroceles are caused when something is wrong with one of the testes. For example, infection, inflammation, injury, or tumours of a testis may cause fluid to form which leads to a hydrocele forming.

Some babies are born with a hydrocele. One often occurs if the baby has a hernia and both are usually fixed soon after birth by a surgical operation.

## Do I need any tests?

A doctor will want to check that the testes are healthy. If the hydrocele is small and the doctor can feel the testis no further tests may be needed. Usually an ultrasound scan of the testes will be advised. This can check the testes to make sure there is no underlying cause for the hydrocele.

## What are the treatments for hydrocele?

- **Leave alone.** If the hydrocele causes no symptoms one option is simply to leave it alone. If it becomes larger or troublesome, you can always change your mind.
- **Drainage.** The fluid can be drained with a needle and syringe. However, it is common for the sac of the hydrocele to refill with fluid within a few months and risks causing infection and bleeding in the hydrocele sac. Draining every now and then may be an option if you are an older person and not fit for surgery.
- **Surgery.** Hydroceles can usually be cured with a relatively simple surgical operation.

(Most hydroceles occur with normal testes. In the rare situation of an underlying disease of a testis causing the hydrocele, other treatments may also be advised)

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## Further information

For general queries about hydroceles telephone the Urology Centre on:

Tel: 0151 282 6797 / 0151 282 6877

Text phone number: 18001 0151 282 6797 / 18001 0151 282 6877

For clinical questions specific to your case, telephone the secretary of your Urology Consultant

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