

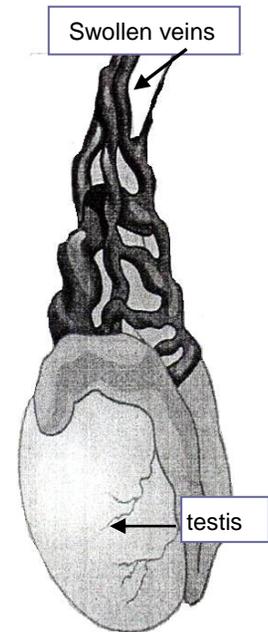
## **Varicocele**

### **What is a varicocele?**

A varicocele is a swelling of the veins that drain the testicle. It is often described as feeling like a bag of worms.

- Most often it does not cause pain.
- It is almost always on the left side but it can happen on both sides.
- It affects about 15 out of 100 boys. It is normally found in boys between the ages of 10 and 15 years during a routine exam.
- A varicocele is graded on a scale of 1 to 3. The largest is 3.
- It can cause the testicle to be smaller than it should be. Sometimes this may cause a low sperm count.

The grade of the varicocele and the size of the testicle help your doctor decide if surgery is needed. If surgery is not needed, your son should have an exam every year to watch the growth of the testicle. These exams should continue throughout puberty or until about age 17.



### **What do I need to know before my child's surgery?**

A nurse will call you 1 to 3 days before your child's surgery. The nurse will go over instructions that need to be followed before surgery. The nurse will also tell you when your child has to stop eating and drinking. **It is very important to follow these instructions. Surgery will be canceled if they are not followed. This is for your child's health.**

### **What happens after surgery?**

#### **Diet**

On the first day after the procedure, limit your son's diet to light foods that are easily digested. The nurse will review this with you before you go home.

#### **Activity**

Your son's activities, including straddle toys, sports and rough play, should be limited after surgery. The surgeon will tell you when they can start normal activities. Your son should take it easy the first couple days of full activity and stop the activity if the wound starts to hurt.

#### **Wound Care**

- There will be an incision on the lower abdomen. It is closed with stitches that dissolve. They do not have to be removed.

- At first a firm ridge will develop at the wound. This is normal. It will slowly go away over the next few weeks to months.
- There will be a light dressing over the wound. This may fall off after a few days. If it is still in place after one week, you should take it off.
- Your son may shower after three days. The wound can be patted dry.
- Bruising and a little swelling are common. At first, mild swelling of the scrotum is normal. Call if there is
  - severe scrotal swelling such as doubling in size.
  - severe pain.
  - swelling, tenderness or redness.
  - drainage.
- Tight fitting underwear or a scrotal supporter may help with comfort. Your son can decide this on his own.

**Complications** may include:

- wound infection or bleeding.
- fluid around the testis. This is called Hydroceles. It happens to 5 out of 100 (5%) boys. Most often it goes away on its own. If it does not, surgery may be needed.
- The varicocele comes back in about 5% of children. This may require another surgery.

**Follow-up**

Your doctor will tell you when to follow-up in the clinic. It is normally 2 to 4 weeks after surgery.

**ALERT:** Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has:

- A fever of 101° F (38.5° C) or higher that does not go away.
- Bleeding from the incision that is more than light spotting on the dressing.
- Vomiting that does not go away after 24 hours.
- Pain that is not helped by medicine or is getting worse.
- Pus or bad smelling drainage from the incision.
- More swelling and redness of the incision.
- Special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

**Pediatric Urology**

Monday – Friday 8:00am – 4:30 pm

(414) 266-3794

Monday – Friday 4:30pm – 8:00am and weekends

(414) 266-2000 ask for the Urology  
Resident on call

**This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.**