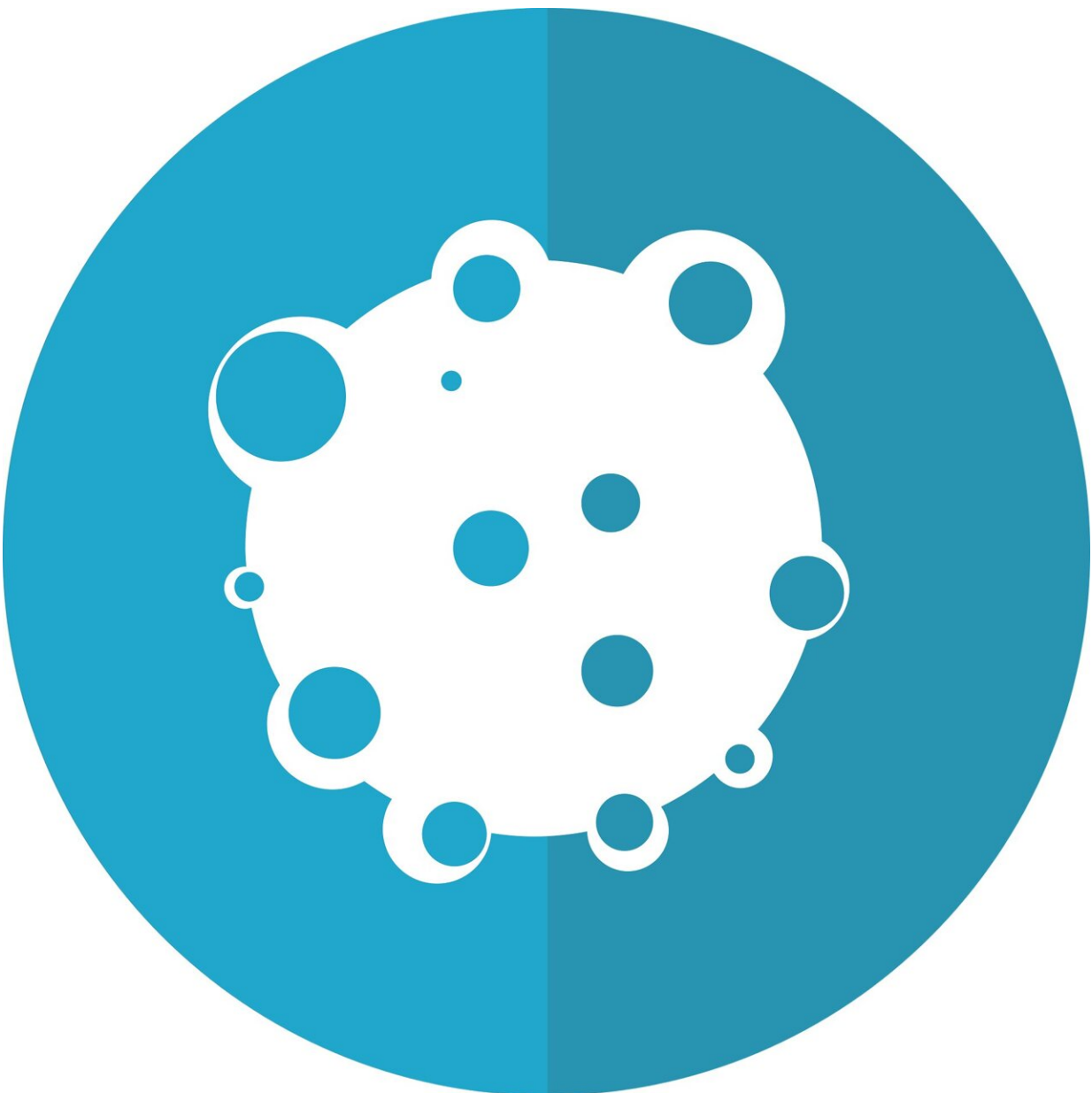


Healthy Men: April is Testicular Cancer Awareness Month. It's time to support lifesaving testicular self-exams

April 5 2022, by Armin Brott



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Dear Healthy Men: I just read that the United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) is recommending against men and boys doing testicular self-exams. What could possibly be wrong with educating young men about how to examine themselves for early signs of cancer?

A: I agree completely—and I'm far from alone. In fact, an entire coalition of advocacy groups is openly calling for the USPSTF to reconsider its recommendation against screening for testicular [cancer](#), which includes a recommendation against self-exams. The coalition is also calling for increased research and greater awareness of the challenges facing testicular cancer patients, survivors and their loved ones.

I believe that if the USPSTF recommendations are allowed to stand, men will die unnecessarily. Testicular cancer is the most common cancer among men aged 15 to 35, but has one of the highest survival rates, if it's found and treated early.

"Early detection is essential to reducing both the physical and mental impact of testicular cancer for the thousands of men and boys who are diagnosed each year," says Brandon Leonard, chair of the American Public Health Association's Men's Health Caucus. Leonard points out that men diagnosed at later stages have increased risks of anxiety, depression, [heart disease](#) and short- and long-term memory loss, along with higher rates of impotence, incontinence or loss of libido.

Bottom line? Awareness and early detection are critically important.

"A testicular self-exam is a simple tool that men and boys can use to check for anything unusual and discuss with their provider if there is a concern," adds Leonard.

Nevertheless, the USPSTF still recommends against testicular self-exams and against testicular cancer screening in [clinical settings](#), claiming that there isn't enough data to support changing the "D" recommendation (meaning that screening and self-exams either offer no benefit or that the harms outweigh any benefits). To suggest that it's dangerous to learn about your body and examine it for changes is simply absurd.

A 2018 article published in the *American Journal of Men's Health* found that the USPSTF's recommendation to not screen for testicular cancer goes against the available data and the logic of preventative care.

"The new studies build on earlier studies that support the benefits of regular screening by individuals and their physicians," the article reports. The authors urge the USPSTF to adjust the grade to "B," indicating that "there is high certainty that the net benefit is moderate or there is moderate certainty that the net benefit is moderate to substantial."

A growing number of experts agree.

"It's time males became more aware of the risks and began to take action to become familiar with their bodies," says Dr. Michael J. Rovito, associate professor of Health Sciences at the University of Central Florida, and founder of the Male Wellness Collective.

"Males should perform testicular self-examination monthly to monitor if anything abnormal develops. If something out of the ordinary is discovered, males should speak to their health care provider immediately," he adds. "Early detection for testicular cancer is absolutely critical. Many years of life from too many men and boys have

been lost because of this disease."

Michael Craycraft, a clinical pharmacist and founder of the Testicular Cancer Society, adds: "New patient-reported data indicates that testicular self-examination, knowledge and confidence is protective of later stage diagnosis, where the treatments alone are a substantial component of disease-related mortality."

Unfortunately, early detection of any condition in males is made even more difficult because the Affordable Care Act still doesn't provide no-cost, annual well-man visits similar to the annual well-woman visits that are included under the legislation.

For more information on testicular cancer, I encourage you to visit TesticularCancerAwarenessMonth.com, where you'll find info on risk factors, warning signs, the benefits of screenings (and how to perform them) and treatment options. The site offers a variety of resources to turn a difficult-to-discuss problem into an interactive and easier-to-approach learning experience.

You'll also find links to the organizations in the coalition I mentioned, which include the APHA Men's Health Caucus, Men's Health Network, Healthy Men Inc., the University of Central Florida's Testicular Cancer Research Collaborative, the Testicular Cancer Society, the Male Wellness Collective and others, all of which are committed to improving the quality of life for [testicular cancer](#) patients and survivors while bringing awareness to their issues and calling for more powerful tools to assess their health and well-being.

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