Dear Alice,

Do the testicles store and/or produce sperm? If not, what are they for?

?Ball-sy

**Answer**

Dear Ball-sy,

Ah, the family jewels. Testicles produce sperm and the hormone testosterone. Sperm grows at the back of the testicle, in the epididymis. The testicles hang in a sack, called the scrotum, that sits outside of the body because it is necessary for sperm to be stored at a temperature that is slightly below that of the body.

Just as penis size varies from one man to the next, there is a wide range in testicle size as a proportion of the human body. In other words, some balls are big while others are small! In addition, no men are completely symmetrical. It is perfectly normal for one testicle to be larger or smaller than the other, and for the two to hang at different angles or heights.

Men should perform monthly testicular self-examinations (TSE). In doing so, a man becomes familiar with his body and will notice any changes. Testicular cancer, although rare, can be fatal if not detected early enough. A TSE can best be done in the shower because the hot water relaxes the scrotum and soap reduces friction while examining. Here are some guidelines for performing testicular self-exam:

- Find each testicle and the epididymis.
- Turn each testicle between the thumb and forefinger - you should feel a round, firm surface.
- Examine the rest of the scrotum contents. Feel for changes.
- If you feel a lump on the testicle surface, even if it is not painful, see a health care provider.

If a man notices a significant change to the size of one of his testicles, or experiences soreness, sensitivity or bumps, it is important that he check in with a health care provider.

Alice!

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