The Male Reproductive System

Guide to Reading

- **Building Vocabulary**
  Write each of the terms below. As you read this lesson, write the definition next to each term.
  - reproduction (p. 374)
  - reproductive system (p. 374)
  - sperm (p. 375)
  - testes (p. 375)
  - semen (p. 375)

- **Focusing on the Main Ideas**
  In this lesson, you will learn to
  - describe the function of the male reproductive system.
  - identify the organs and structures of the male reproductive system.
  - identify common problems of the male reproductive system.
  - explain how to care for the male reproductive system.
  - identify ways of detecting testicular cancer.

- **Reading Strategy**
  **Sequencing**
  Take a look at Figure 12.3. Using this figure, trace the path of sperm from where they are produced to the outside of the body. Make a list of the structures that sperm pass through.

Quick Write

Do you plan to have children when you become an adult? How do you picture your family life when you are older?

Reproduction

All forms of life on earth reproduce. **Reproduction** is the process by which living organisms produce others of their own kind. Each human results from the joining of two cells that come from the reproductive systems of a female and a male. The **reproductive system** consists of the body organs and structures that make it possible to produce children.

Reading Check

**Identify** Define reproductive system.

- The male and female reproductive systems make it possible for people to have children. **What process allows living things to produce others of their own kind?**
Parts of the Male Reproductive System

The male reproductive system’s main job is to produce sperm. Sperm are male reproductive cells. Each sperm can join with a female reproductive cell and make another human.

The testes are the pair of glands that produce sperm. The testes are located in the scrotum. The scrotum keeps the testes at the right temperature to produce sperm. Sperm leaves the testes and travels to the urethra.

Semen (SEE-muhn) is a mixture of sperm and fluids that protect sperm and carry them through the tubes of the male reproductive system. The semen is released from the urethra through the penis. The body’s release of semen is called ejaculation (i-ja-kyuh-LAY-shun). There are three to four million sperm cells in each ejaculation. The parts of the male reproductive system are shown in Figure 12.3.

FIGURE 12.3

Parts of the Male Reproductive System

Each part of the male reproductive system has a job to do. What part produces sperm?

Prostate gland
This gland produces fluids that protect sperm and help sperm move through the reproductive system.

Urethra
This is a small tube that runs from the bladder along the length of the penis. Urine and semen, at different times, leave the body through the urethra.

Scrotum
The scrotum is a pouch that contains the testes.

Testes
These are also called testicles. They are the glands that produce sperm and testosterone. Testosterone is the hormone that regulates male sexual development.

Penis
The penis is made of a spongy tissue. It has many blood vessels. The urethra runs through the penis.

Epididymis
This collection of tubes is located next to the testes. Mature sperm are stored here.

Visit a doctor for a yearly checkup to prevent health problems. What are some issues that a male might discuss with a health care provider?
**Problems of the Male Reproductive System**

An inguinal hernia can form when a male strains his abdominal muscles. **How can an inguinal hernia be repaired?**

**Inguinal hernia**
The intestines are held in place by a layer of muscles. Sometimes these muscles have a weak spot due to muscle strain or other injuries. A part of the intestine may push through the weak spot into the scrotum or into the area above the inner thigh. This is called an inguinal hernia. A hernia can be treated through surgery.

**Testicular cancer**
Cancer is the uncontrolled growth of abnormal cells. A lump or swelling of the testicles, and pain or tenderness in the testicles, abdomen, or groin, may be signs of testicular cancer. It is the most common cancer of males aged 14 to 34. If it is detected early enough, many of the serious complications can be prevented.

**Prostate enlargement**
If the prostate gland becomes enlarged, it presses on the urethra and blocks the flow of urine. Medicine or surgery can be used to treat an enlarged prostate.

**Prostate cancer**
The tissue of the prostate gland can become cancerous. This condition is more common in older men. This cancer can be treated through surgery, radiation treatment, or chemotherapy.

**Sterility**
Males who produce no sperm are sterile. Sterility can be caused by untreated STDs or exposure to pesticides, lead, or dangerous amounts of radiation, such as X rays. Certain drugs can also cause sterility. Some types of sterility can be treated by medications or surgery.

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**Male Health Problems**

The male reproductive system can sometimes not work properly. Most problems can be prevented or treated. Otherwise, they can lead to pain, injury, the inability to produce children, or even death. Some common problems are described in Figure 12.4.

**Caring for the Male Reproductive System**

Males can take the following steps to help keep their reproductive systems healthy.

- Do a testicular self-examination every month after a warm shower or bath.
- Shower or bathe regularly.
- Wear protective gear, such as an athletic supporter or cup, when participating in contact sports.
- Visit a health care provider for regular physical checkups.

**Reading Check** Identify What are four ways to care for the male reproductive system?
Health Skills Activity

Practicing Healthful Behaviors

How to Do a Testicular Self-Examination

When a male goes for his yearly physical checkup, the doctor will usually examine him for testicular cancer. This can help detect the disease before it becomes very serious or difficult to treat. Testicular cancer can grow and spread very quickly if it is not detected. So it is important for males to do a testicular self-examination every month.

On Your Own

Go to the library or use the Internet to find instructions for how to do a testicular self-examination. Write out the instructions. Make a list of at least four signs of testicular cancer to watch out for. Then write two questions that a male might have for a health care provider about testicular self-examinations.

Lesson 3 Review

After You Read

Review this lesson for new terms, major headings, and Reading Checks.

What I Learned

1. **Vocabulary** Define reproduction.

2. **List** What are four problems of the male reproductive system?

3. **Name** What are two types of gear that protect the reproductive system of a male athlete?

4. **Explain** How do regular visits to the doctor help prevent male reproductive problems?

Thinking Critically

5. **Evaluate** Why is it important to take care of the male reproductive system?

6. **Apply** Tim has noticed a swelling in one of his testes. He is uncomfortable discussing this problem with his parents, but it is not going away. What steps should Tim take to prevent a serious problem? What advice would you give him about the importance of monitoring his personal health?

Applying Health Skills

7. **Accessing Information** Use the Internet to find valid information about anabolic steroids. Include the information that you find in an informative brochure that warns against the use of these illegal substances.