

Hydrocele

Family Education Handout

What is a Hydrocele?

- A hydrocele is a collection of fluid in the scrotum around the testicle.
- A hydrocele can be present at birth or happen at any age and can occur on one of both sides.
- During normal fetal development the testicles start developing up near the kidneys and then travel down into the scrotum. The testicle goes through an opening between the abdominal cavity and the scrotal cavity called the processus vaginalis which is supposed to close once the testicle is in the scrotum.
- There are multiple kinds of hydroceles- you urologist will be able to tell you which kind your son has
 - Non-communicating hydrocele
 - The opening does close after the testicle is in the scrotum but there is fluid trapped in the scrotum.
 - Found most often in newborns and may take up to one year to resolve.
 - Communicating hydrocele
 - The opening does not close and fluid is able to go back and forth between the abdominal cavity and the scrotal cavity.

Signs/Symptoms

- Swelling in the scrotum around the testicle.
- If the swelling is constant it may be a non-communicating hydrocele.
- If the swelling comes and goes throughout the course of a day it may be a communicating hydrocele.
- Fluid around the testis does not typically cause pain or discomfort.

Risks

- If the opening between the abdominal cavity and the scrotal cavity is open (common with communicating hydroceles), there is a chance that a loop of bowel or abdominal contents could slip down into the scrotal cavity. This is called a hernia.
- If the loop of bowel or abdominal contents gets stuck it could be a medical emergency because the tissue is not getting good blood flow.

Treatment

- Treatment depends on the kind of hydrocele
 - Non-communicating hydrocele
 - Typically resolve on their own over time and do not require surgery.
 - May require surgery if swelling persists past 12 months of age.
 - Communicating hydrocele
 - Typically, will not resolve on their own and do require surgery.
 - The surgery is called a hydrocele/hernia repair and may be needed on one or both sides.
 - The surgery is recommended to decrease the chance of a loop of bowel or abdominal contents getting stuck which could hurt the bowel and the testicle.
 - A hydrocele/hernia repair is performed in the operating room under anesthesia and child is usually able to go home the same day.
 - Generally, one small incision is made in the groin.

Phone Number

Department of Urology – 508-334-8765

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