

Spermatocele

A spermatocele is a cystic enlargement within the scrotum resulting from a partial obstruction of the tubular system that transports sperm.

Spermatoceles typically contain milky fluid, which on examination is found to contain sperm cells. Spermatoceles can vary in size greatly, ranging from a “pea” sized mass to a “grapefruit” sized enlargement. They often give the impression of a third testicle; in fact, patients frequently complain to the urologist about the “growth of an additional testicle.”

Spermatoceles are evaluated by physical examination and are often further characterized by an ultrasound of the scrotum, allowing for a detailed examination of the underlying testicle and epididymis. Examination typically demonstrates that spermatoceles arise from the head of the epididymis, the structure located above and behind the testicle where sperm mature and are stored.

Many spermatoceles are not symptomatic, causing only a painless enlargement of the scrotum. On occasion, spermatoceles can cause an uncomfortable dragging sensation. Many small and moderate size spermatoceles can be managed simply by careful periodic observation to ensure that they are not continuing to enlarge or cause progressive symptoms. When a spermatocele progresses to the point where it causes discomfort, pain, or deformity, it can be removed by a relatively simple surgical procedure performed on ambulatory basis.