

Undescended Testes

Definition

Undescended testes occur following an abnormality of migration of the testes. The testes are located outwith the scrotum and can be described as retractile, ectopic or incompletely descended.

Diagnosis

It is important to distinguish between retractile and ectopic or incompletely descended testes. Retractable testes are normally present within the scrotum until the child is approached for examination, at which point they ascend. If the testes can be brought down to the base of the scrotum with gentle manipulation then they are almost certainly retractile. This process is helped if the child is comfortable and the environment is warm.

Management

Approximately 5% of full term babies have one or both testes undescended. By three months of age only 2% will remain undescended. Further spontaneous descent following 6 months of age is unlikely.

At the 6 week check, if there is doubt that one or both testes are not palpable, please refer the baby to surgical paediatrics at Yorkhill.

Retractable testes are a normal variant. Parents should be reassured that the testes will stop being retractile as their son develops. Referral is not required.

Some boys will present later with undescended testes that have been missed on earlier screening examinations, or have become undescended at a later age (i.e. acquired undescended testis). Prompt referral is advised in this situation.

Both incompletely descended testes and ectopic testes are treated by surgery. The procedure (orchidopexy) is performed under general anaesthetic, usually as a day case. At Yorkhill we aim to perform early surgery, between 6 months and 2 years of age.

Complications

In cases of undescended testes there is an increased risk of torsion and associated inguinal hernia. If the patient experiences pain or swelling then urgent referral is advised.

In cases of bilateral undescended testes there is a risk of subfertility

Boys born with bilateral **non-palpable** testis need to be assessed **urgently**. However, this should have been identified at the child's baby check.

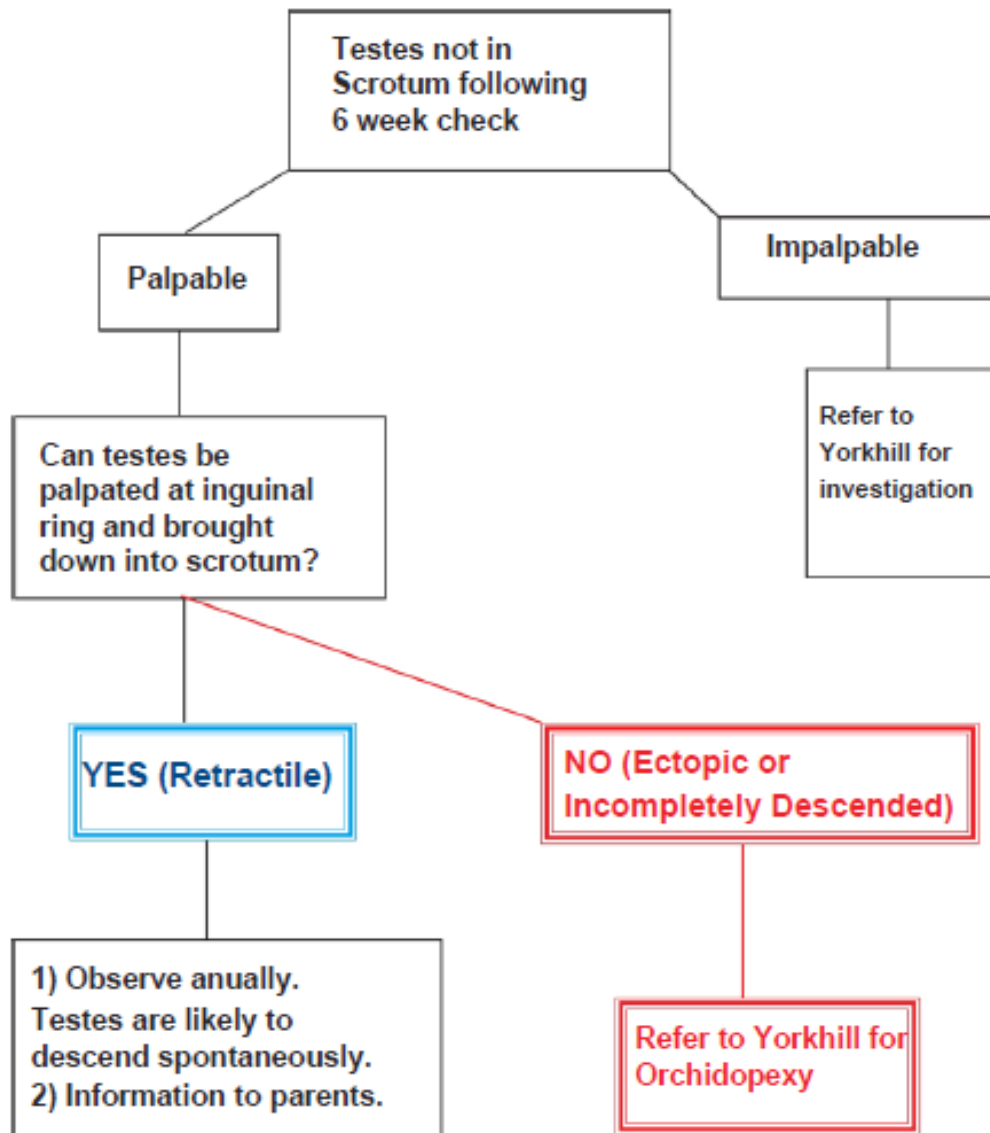
Parent information

Parents should be reassured that if a baby boy has an undescended testicle that in most cases no surgical intervention is required as most testes are retractile.

If surgery is required it will be performed when the child is 1 to 2 years old, so early referral to a specialist is not indicated unless there are complications.

An information leaflet may be useful.

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Disclaimer: This document is intended as a guide only and should not be used as a substitute for clinical judgement. Variations, taking individual circumstances into account, may be appropriate. The authors of these guidelines have made considerable efforts to ensure the information on which they are based is accurate and up to date. The authors accept no responsibility for any inaccuracies, information perceived as misleading, or the success of any treatment regimen detailed in the guidelines.