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DR. SEAN KENNIFF/ASK DR. SEAN DR. SEAN KENNIFF

ASK DR. SEAN

A look at cancer-infertility link

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Q: *Does being infertile raise my risk of testicular cancer?*

A: Until recently it was unknown whether male infertility increased the risk of developing testicular cancer. But a new study finds some infertile men face a much higher risk of developing the condition. According to Dr. Abe Halfen, an infertility expert in Pembroke Pines, the cancer-infertility link comes as a bit of a surprise.

"Testicular cancer is a fairly rare cancer so we're not talking about a lot of men," Halfen said, "But this study was a real eye-opener for us."

In the study, researchers from New York examined the medical records of more than 3,800 men who had infertility and abnormal semen analyses. A total of 10 men developed testicular cancer. Although 10 out of 3,800 men may be a small number, the rate of cancer development is about 20 times higher than would be expected in the general population. The findings could change the way many fertility experts practice, Halfen says.

"It may be important for us to consult a urologist and evaluate these infertile men for testicular cancer on a more routine basis," he said.

Though it's rare, testicular cancer is the most common cancer to strike men between the ages of 15 and 35. Men should routinely examine themselves for lumps on their testicles, and tumors can be further investigated with ultrasound. If discovered early the chances of curing testicular cancer are excellent.

Dr. Sean Kenniff covers health for WFOR CBS-4. The advice in this column is not a substitute for consulting a physician. Write to him at

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