

5 men with serious BALLS

You're looking at five survivors of testicular cancer. Now read on to find out why you should be nagging every man you know to check himself tonight



"The best way to deal with cancer is having someone to talk to"

After being diagnosed with testicular cancer, Philly Morris, 34, from Oxton, The Wirral, set up a support website called www.checkemlads.com

"Blokes tend to think only old men get testicular cancer. Yet I was 32 when I went into hospital to have a kidney stone removed and found out I'd have to lose a right testicle. Three days later, I had the operation. I woke up feeling groggy from the morphine and immediately had a feel. Unbeknown to me, they'd given me a prosthetic testicle. And so, for one brief moment, I was over the moon as I thought it had all been a terrible mistake and I still had my own ball. Then when I realised, I was devastated all over again.

"I distanced myself from my girlfriend; whenever she wanted to talk about it, I just shut down. We split up, partly because I was depressed – I found out later my testosterone levels were low, which I'm now being treated for. Men are conditioned by society to be macho and 'get on with it', rather than be emotional. That's why I set up www.checkemlads.com – it offers an open forum for men to talk about testicular cancer and swap stories. I believe the best way to deal with cancer is having someone to talk to who knows exactly what you're going through.

"I was lucky, as my cancer was caught quite early, so I didn't have to have chemo. The prosthetic felt odd at first, but once I got used to it, it really helped me come to terms with losing a testicle, and six months later I was in remission.

"I would urge every man to get even the tiniest lump checked and push for a second opinion when necessary. Girlfriends can help, too. In my experience, around half of all lumps are found by girlfriends."

"I'd been with my girlfriend for three weeks when I was diagnosed"

Jonny Manners, 27, runs a record label in Weston-super-Mare, Somerset

"I was singing at a gig in December 2005 when I first noticed a dull ache in my testicles. The GP said it was a urinary infection, but I wasn't convinced and arranged to have an ultrasound on 29 December. The consultant's face dropped when he looked at my results. He informed me that I would need to have a testicle removed by the end of January.

"I'd only been with my girlfriend, Sophie, for three weeks. We'd booked to go to Paris for New Year; I was amazed that she didn't want to pull out. 'I'm not afraid of this and will stand by you,' she said. We had a great time but, the moment the Eurostar pulled into London, I came back to earth with a sickening thud – it was time to face reality.

"The cancer had spread to my lymph nodes and so I had to have chemotherapy. Chemo is like the worst hangover you've ever had. You're exhausted but you can't sleep, you get tinnitus, and at one point I couldn't feel the ends of my fingers. Even now, if I smell the perfume Sophie wore during my chemo, I gag because of the mental association. Finally, in November 2006, I found out I was in remission.

"Sophie was my rock. She made sure I looked after myself when all I wanted to do was go out on benders with friends. When the daytime TV started becoming soul-destroying, she kept me company – at the expense of her own social life. It's made us stronger as a couple. Nearly two years later, we're still together."



"I once offered to feel a mate's balls to check for lumps!"

Liam Burke, 28, is an IT engineer from Liverpool

"Just before Christmas 2000, my testicle swelled up to the size of an apple. Three days later, I was having it removed. It was terrifying – all of my dignity went out of the window.

"A few days after the operation, I went round to a cousin's house for some family drinks. It was cringingly awkward. All I wanted to do was talk about it, but nobody knew what to say so they just sat there in silence. Eventually I couldn't take it anymore, so I blurted out, 'If you want to ask me any questions, just ask!' But nobody did.

"Thankfully, the operation was a success and I didn't need chemo. Throughout the whole ordeal I never spoke to anyone else who'd had testicular cancer. Then I came across checkemlads.com. I now understand how important it is that men communicate and support each other. I've even offered to feel a mate's testicles because he was worried about a lump. I'd be willing to do it as it could save his life!"

GO ON THEN, CHECK 'EM!

Get your man to check his testicles once a month by rolling each testicle gently between his finger and thumb. He should see his GP if he feels any of the following:

- a lump in either one
- any enlargement
- a dull ache in the abdomen or groin
- a sudden collection of fluid in the scrotum
- a growth or tenderness in the upper chest

Each testicle has an epididymis (like a tube) at the top to carry sperm. Don't panic if he feels this, it's normal



"I don't care if people laugh at our picture"

Tim Stollery, 35, is a computer consultant from west London

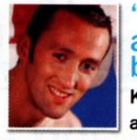
"In June 2003 I felt something wrong in my testicles – not a lump; they just felt 'different' – so I asked a GP for a physical examination. He said he didn't think it was necessary, so I went to my GUM clinic, where they examined me and said I was fine. A year and a half later, I had a crippling cough and since the GP was dragging his feet on referring me for a chest X-ray, I went to A&E.

"The doctor was so shaken when he saw my X-ray that he spilt water all over his keyboard. He told me I had testicular cancer and it had spread to create secondary cancers, including lung cancer, which had been the cause of my cough. I started chatting to Philly and other men online, and that really helped me get through the operation and chemotherapy.

"In February last year, I found out I was in remission and I was over the moon. I've just come out of a two-year relationship, so now I also have to find a woman who won't be intimidated by what I've been through and will understand it's unlikely I'll be able to father children without IVF.

"I don't care if people laugh at this picture – if it makes just one man check himself, it'll be worth it."

● **To read more of Tim's story, go to www.timstollery.com.**



"I was only 30 and thought I was bulletproof"

Kalvin Evans, 31, is a project manager from Warrington, Cheshire

"Last January I found a pea-sized lump in my left testicle. My family history of cancer made me high risk, yet I wasn't in the habit of checking my balls. I was only 30 and thought I was bulletproof. My reaction was, 'Oh, shit.'

"The next day I went to see a GP and breathed a huge sigh of relief when he said it was just a cyst. However, six months later, I moved house and changed doctors. She noticed the lump and sent me for an ultrasound. I was dumbfounded when I was told it was cancer. I felt so angry that it hadn't been picked up earlier.

"I've dubbed the month I had the operation 'black August' because I lost both of my grandmas that month, too. Despite being one testicle down, I feel very lucky: I have a wife and two kids, I'm healthy in other ways and, despite the six-month delay, the cancer hadn't spread."

BY CATHERINE GRAY. PHOTOGRAPH JAMES AND JAMES