

# A Parents Guide to

# VARICOCELE

## What is a Varicocele?

A varicocele is a swelling of the veins that lead from the testicles. Think of a varicocele in the same way you would think of varicose veins in the legs. A varicocele is often described as feeling like a “bag of worms.”

## What are the Symptoms?

Varicoceles can present around puberty in about 15% of boys and are often seen in the left testicle. Varicoceles usually do not cause pain. They usually do not have any symptoms and are detected by a routine physical exam by your son’s doctor.

In most cases, a varicocele is not harmful to your son. However, some varicoceles can interfere with the growth of the testicle, resulting in fertility issues down the road. Fortunately, varicoceles that do affect fertility can be surgically corrected to potentially improve fertility in the future.

## Diagnosing and Treating Varicoceles

Diagnosis of a varicocele is made upon physical exam in the office with a pediatric urologist.

- If your son is not experiencing any pain, there are no changes in testicular size and consistency, and your child is comfortable with a plan of follow-up, then an appointment may be made for ongoing observation.
- In rare cases, a varicocele will cause pain. In these cases, your doctor may recommend a common surgical procedure called a varicocelectomy that treats the affected veins through a small incision. This procedure is commonly done on an outpatient basis.

If a varicocele causes pain or affects the growth of the testicle, management by a pediatric urologist is appropriate.

**To learn more about varicoceles, visit [forkids.chesapeakeurology.com](http://forkids.chesapeakeurology.com) or contact Chesapeake Urology For Kids at 443-738-8180.**

