Known Health Effects DES exposure in Males

1. Non-cancerous epididymal cysts (growths on the testicles);
2. Other genital abnormalities;
3. infertility

- My mother was prescribed DES while pregnant with me. Am I at an increased risk for any health problems?

Only a few studies have focused on health problems experienced by men exposed to DES before birth (in the womb), known as DES Sons. The research has focused on the following health concerns among DES Sons.

Non-Cancerous Epididymal Cysts

The most consistent research finding for DES Sons indicates that they have an increased risk for non-cancerous epididymal cysts, which are growths on the testicles (Bibbo, 1977; Gill, 1979; Conley, 1983; Niculescu, 1985; Wilcox, 1995). In one study, 21% of DES Sons had non-cancerous epididymal cysts compared with 5% of unexposed men (Gill, 1979).

Other Genital Abnormalities

Whether DES increases the risk for other genital abnormalities in men remains unclear. A few studies have reported that DES Sons experience a greater likelihood of being born with

a) undescended testicles (cryptorchidism),
b) a misplaced opening of the penis (hypospadias), or
c) a smaller than normal penis (microphallus).

These studies estimated that 15%-32% of DES Sons experience one or more of these structural differences compared with 5%-8% of unexposed men (Gill, 1979; Wilcox, 1995). Other studies, however, have not identified an increased risk of structural differences (Leary, 1984; Vessey, 1983). Because findings have been inconsistent, researchers cannot say with certainty that DES causes these types of genital abnormalities in DES-exposed men.

Infertility

DES Sons are not at an increased risk for infertility. Some DES Sons have been concerned that DES exposure might be linked to infertility. Although one study found a lower sperm count in men exposed to DES compared with unexposed men (Gill, 1979), a 40-year follow-up study of DES Sons found no increased risk of infertility among men exposed to DES before birth (Wilcox, 1995).

Men Exposed to DES before Birth (in the Womb), Known as DES Sons

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