

# What's So Funny about Testicular Cancer?

**Humor helps one survivor heal from a serious disease.**

## HUMOR THERAPY

When Doug Keenan noticed a lump in his left testicle, he didn't take action right away.

"What is supposed to be the size of a grape grew to the size of a golf ball," says Doug. But since he didn't feel any pain, he waited—for three or four months.

Doug is a 37-year-old computer programmer who holds 10 U.S. patents, one for inventing the universal remote control. And Doug happens to be one of thousands of men in the country who hear their doctor say, "We need to remove your testicle."

### Did I Hear You Correctly?

It's an embarrassing and frightening topic that most men avoid. It is too scary to think about, let alone be reminded of by monthly self-exams and yearly checkups. But, according to the National Cancer Institute, testicular cancer is one of the most common forms of cancer in young men between the ages of 15 and 35.

Testicular cancer accounts for about 7,200 cases in the United States each year.

An optimist, Doug used humor to deal with the experience. "After the testicle was removed my wife Theresa and I created a top

10 list of the best things about losing an old friend. Funny, yet true statements like: 'Less of a target for tennis balls, rakes and baby's feet.'"

### Learning to Be Not-So-Serious

Susan Scherr, director of community and strategic alliances for the National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship (NCCS) and a two-time cancer survivor, says humor releases tension. "It puts you in a better mindset and back in sync with the regular population."

Scherr notes sometimes friends and family members might not identify with dark humor. However, you can share your humor at support groups with other cancer survivors and "they'll get it, because they know where you are coming from."

### Why Humor Heals

Humor connects people. It allowed Doug to be playful when discussing radiation treatment with his doctor. "I told him my body wasn't too happy after he fed it a nuclear bomb," says Doug. Luckily the effects of radiation usually wore off in about four hours.

A cancer survivor of four years, Doug is now a self-proclaimed poster child for the disease and educates high school teens. "I tell

these kids there is no obstacle we cannot overcome," says Doug, who also tells them to examine themselves in the shower and to go and see a doctor immediately if they notice any swelling or change in appearance of the testicles. "Don't wait, don't play games with your health and most important, don't be afraid," he says. "The fear is the worst part; whatever you are facing is never as bad as the fear itself."

### Silver Lining

Doug says that out of all the cancers out there, he was lucky to get testicular cancer because it is one of the most treatable.

In the past 35 years, the survival rate has increased from 63 percent to 91 percent.

Laughter, a positive outlook and a passion for life have helped Doug beat the odds. "Before being diagnosed with cancer, it never crosses your mind. Now it's always back there," he says. "But you're not a cancer victim—you're a cancer survivor." □

### Need a little help in the humor department?

Fill a shoebox with clips of your favorite cartoons, jokes, toys, play dough and funny hats or glasses. Pull the box out when you need a dose of laughter. Try these ways to raise your spirits:

#### At Home

Rent a video when you need a good laugh. Try "Best of Candid Camera: Special Edition," "Naked Gun," "Robin Williams Live at the Met," "The Jerk," or "Bill Cosby—Himself."

Get a free cancer survival toolbox from the National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship. The kit includes three audiotapes to help people deal with cancer diagnosis and treatment. Developed by leading cancer organizations. Call 1-877-TOOLS-4-U.

#### On the Web

Check out the Testicular Cancer Resource Center at [www.acor.org/TCRC](http://www.acor.org/TCRC). It is a comprehensive site with detailed information on self-exams, questions to ask your doctor and treatment procedures.

#### From a Book

*A Cancer Survivor's Almanac: Charting Your Journey*, edited by Barbara Hoffman, J.D.

*Don't Get Mad—Get Funny! Using Humor to Manage Stress: A Light-hearted Approach to Stress Management*, by Leigh Anne Jasheway and Geoffrey M. Welles

*Compassionate Laughter: Jest for Your Health*, by Patty Wooten, R.N.

*The Healing Power of Humor: Techniques for Getting through Loss, Setbacks, Upsets, Disappointments, Difficulties, Trials, Tribulations and All That*, by Allen Klein

*Anatomy of an Illness as Perceived by the Patient*, by Norman Cousins

To order any of these books, call Books Now at 800/266-5766, ext. 1662.

