



Pharmaceutical
Society of Australia

Self Care
™ Health Advice for Life

Prostate Problems

A man's prostate gland sits underneath his bladder, wrapped around the urethra (urine tube). It makes fluid to support and protect sperm. Prostate problems often cause the prostate gland to enlarge, interfering with bladder function and urine flow. Prostate problems can be helped with medicines and by surgery.

It is very common for a man to develop a prostate problem as he gets older. Changes in the prostate gland usually develop gradually, so symptoms of a prostate problem may be hard to recognise, especially in the early stages. The main prostate problems that men experience are benign prostate enlargement (BPH), prostate cancer and prostatitis.

Benign prostatic hyperplasia or hypertrophy (BPH)

BPH is a non-cancerous enlargement or growth of the prostate gland. It is a common prostate problem that can start after the age of 40 years and affects nearly all men as they age. It is not life-threatening, but can interfere with urine flow.

Signs and symptoms

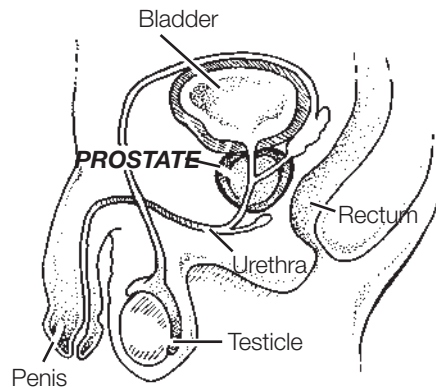
Symptoms of prostate enlargement include:

- Difficulty or delay in starting urine flow
- Stopping and starting during urination
- After feeling finished, a little more urine dribbles out
- A smaller, weaker urine flow
- Taking longer to urinate
- Feeling the bladder has not quite emptied
- Needing to urinate more often, both night and day
- Sudden strong urges to urinate.

Important

Consult a doctor for a prostate check if you:

- Have difficulties with urination or any of the symptoms listed on this card
- Are 40 years or older and have a father or brother who has/had prostate cancer
- Are 50 years or older.



The Prostate

Treatment

Treatment of BPH includes:

- Prescription medicines – some medicines relax muscles in the prostate and bladder and can relieve symptoms within a few weeks. Other types of medicine shrink the prostate and may take several months to relieve symptoms
- Some herbal medicines may relieve symptoms of BPH – ask a pharmacist or doctor
- Surgery (e.g., TURP – to remove some of the prostate gland)
- Other treatments (e.g., laser or ultrasound therapy) to destroy some of the prostate gland.

Prostate cancer

Diagnosed mainly in men over 50 years of age, prostate cancer is one of the most common cancers affecting Australian men. Some types of prostate cancer are very slow growing and may not cause significant problems. Other types of prostate cancer grow more quickly, may spread to other parts of the body and may be life-threatening. In the early stages of prostate cancer, most men have no symptoms

and by the time symptoms are noticed, the cancer is usually more advanced and more difficult to treat.

Treatment for prostate cancer includes:

- Surgery (e.g. prostatectomy) – the entire prostate is removed
- Radiation therapy – may be used in combination with surgery or hormone treatment
- Brachytherapy – radioactive ‘seeds’ are placed inside the prostate
- Hormone therapy – the growth of both normal and cancerous prostate cells depends on the male hormone testosterone. Hormone therapy to block the production or actions of testosterone in the body can stop cancer growth. If the prostate cancer is aggressive and has spread to other parts of the body, hormone therapy in combination with surgery or radiotherapy is often recommended
- Watchful waiting – observing the prostate cancer and waiting to see if any complications start to become evident.

Prostatitis

Prostatitis is inflammation or swelling of the prostate gland, it can be very painful. It is often caused by bacterial infection, but can also occur without bacterial infection. Prostatitis can affect men at any age.

Signs and symptoms

Symptoms of prostatitis include:

- Fevers and chills
- A frequent and urgent need to urinate
- Blood in urine or semen
- Pain when passing urine
- Pelvic, groin or back pain
- Painful ejaculation.

Treatment

Treatment of prostatitis depends on the cause and includes antibiotics, anti-inflammatory and pain relieving medicines and surgery.

Testing

Prostate problems can be detected by:

- Digital rectal examination (DRE) – a doctor inserts a gloved finger into the rectum to feel if the prostate is enlarged or abnormal
- Prostate specific antigen (PSA) blood test – a raised PSA blood level suggests a prostate problem
- Biopsy – samples of prostate tissue are collected by biopsy and tested in the laboratory.

Your **Self Care** Pharmacist

Treatments

Prostate problems are not always treated immediately. Decisions about treatment depend on the prostate problem, how severe the symptoms are and the age, health and preferences of the man involved. Adverse effects of some of the treatments include erection problems and urinary incontinence.

Self care

Ways to relieve urinary symptoms related to prostate problems include:

- Limit caffeine intake (e.g., tea, coffee, cola, energy drinks). Caffeine can increase urine production and irritate your bladder
- Limit alcohol intake. Alcohol can increase urine production and irritate your bladder
- Don't drink anything within one or two hours of bedtime, to reduce night time trips to the toilet
- Avoid constipation. A full, hard bowel can put pressure on the prostate
- Try to urinate when you first feel the urge
- Schedule regular toilet visits (e.g., every four to six hours during the day).

Note: Some medicines (e.g., decongestants) can worsen urinary problems. Ask a pharmacist for advice.

Related fact cards

- *Bladder and Urine Control*
- *Erectile Dysfunction*
- *Men's Health*

For more information

Andrology Australia – phone 1300 303 878 or website www.andrologyaustralia.org

Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia – National Helpline 1800 22 00 99 or website www.prostate.org.au

Lions Australian Prostate Cancer website – www.prostatehealth.org.au

Continence Foundation of Australia – Bladder and bowel control helpline: 1800 33 00 66 or website www.continence.org.au

Consumer Medicine Information (CMI) leaflets – your pharmacist can advise on availability.

NPS Medicines Line – phone 1300 888 763 Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm EST.

The Poisons Information Centre – in case of poisoning phone 131 126 from anywhere in Australia.

Pharmacists are medicines experts. Ask a pharmacist for advice when choosing a medicine.

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