

Prostate Problems

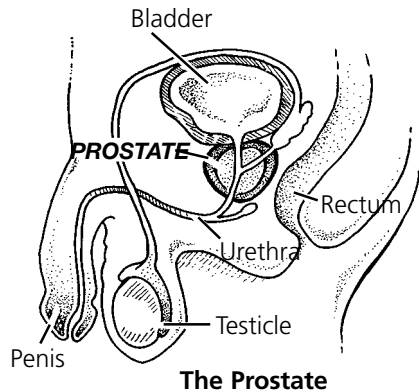
A man's prostate gland sits underneath his bladder, wrapped around the urethra (urine tube). It makes a fluid that becomes part of semen. Prostate problems often cause the prostate gland to get bigger and block urine flow.

Prostate problems can be helped with medicines and by surgery.

The main prostate problems that men experience are benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), prostate cancer and prostatitis.

Benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH)

BPH is an enlargement or growth of the prostate gland that is not a cancer. It is not usually life-threatening, but it can put pressure on the urethra and the bladder, which interferes with bladder function and urine flow. BPH is unusual before the age of 45 years, but it develops in most men as they get older. BPH is the most common prostate problem.



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 slower, weaker urine flow
- Feeling the bladder has not quite emptied
- Needing to urinate more often, both night and day
- Sudden strong urges to urinate.

Treatment

Treatment of BPH includes:

- Prescription medicines. Some medicines relax muscles in the prostate and bladder and can relieve urinary symptoms within a few weeks. Other medicines shrink the prostate gland and may take several months to relieve symptoms
- Some herbal medicines may relieve symptoms of BPH. Ask a pharmacist or doctor
- Transurethral Resection of the Prostate (TURP) surgery 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 any symptoms or serious 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. By the time prostate cancer is causing symptoms, the cancer is usually advanced and more difficult to treat.

Treatment for prostate cancer includes:

- Watchful waiting to see if any complications develop
- Surgery (radical prostatectomy) to remove the entire prostate
- 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 called 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.

Prostatitis

Prostatitis is an inflammation or swelling of the prostate gland. It is not usually life-threatening, but can be very painful. It is most often caused by bacterial infection, but in some cases a cause cannot be found. Prostatitis can affect men at any age.

Signs and symptoms

Symptoms of prostatitis include:

- Pain when passing urine
- Frequent urination
- Feeling an urgent need to urinate
- Blood in urine or semen
- Pelvis, groin or back pain
- Painful ejaculation
- Fevers, chills, tiredness, aches and pains

Treatment

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

Testing

Tests for prostate problems include:

- Digital rectal examination (DRE) – a doctor inserts a gloved finger through the anus 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
- Urinary tract investigations, such as an ultrasound examination
- Prostate biopsy – samples of prostate tissue are collected and tested in the laboratory.

Treatments

Prostate problems are not always treated immediately. Decisions about treatment depend on the prostate problem, how bad the symptoms are and the age, health and preferences of the man

Important

Ask a doctor for a prostate check if you:

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

involved. Side effects of some of the treatments include erection problems and urinary incontinence.

Self care

Ways to relieve urinary symptoms caused by 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
- Plan regular toilet visits (e.g., every four to six hours during the day)

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

For more information

Andrology Australia

Phone: 1300 303 878

Website: www.andrologyaustralia.org

Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia

National Helpline: 1800 22 00 99

Website: www.prostate.org.au

Lions Australian Prostate Cancer Website

Website: www.prostatehealth.org.au

Continence Foundation of Australia

National Continence Helpline

Phone: 1800 33 00 66

Website: www.continence.org.au

Healthdirect Australia

Phone: 1800 022 222

Website: www.healthinsite.gov.au

Consumer Medicine Information (CMI)

Your pharmacist can advise on CMI leaflets.

National Prescribing Service (NPS) Medicines Information

Phone: 1300 MEDICINE (1300 633 424)

Website: www.nps.org.au

The Poisons Information Centre

In case of poisoning phone 13 11 26 from anywhere in Australia.

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

Related fact cards

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

Your Self Care Pharmacy: