

Your Prostate and You

Information and advice on Prostate concerns

What is the Prostate?

The prostate is a fleshy organ which is wrapped around the urethra at the neck of the bladder like a thick collar open at the front. It is made of glands and muscle. When a man has an orgasm, the prostate muscle squeezes a small amount of fluid from the glands into the semen where it seems to energise the sperm.

Why do men get prostate trouble?

In boys and young men the prostate is tiny but it gets gradually larger throughout a man's lifetime. The amount of enlargement varies from man to man as do the problems which it causes.

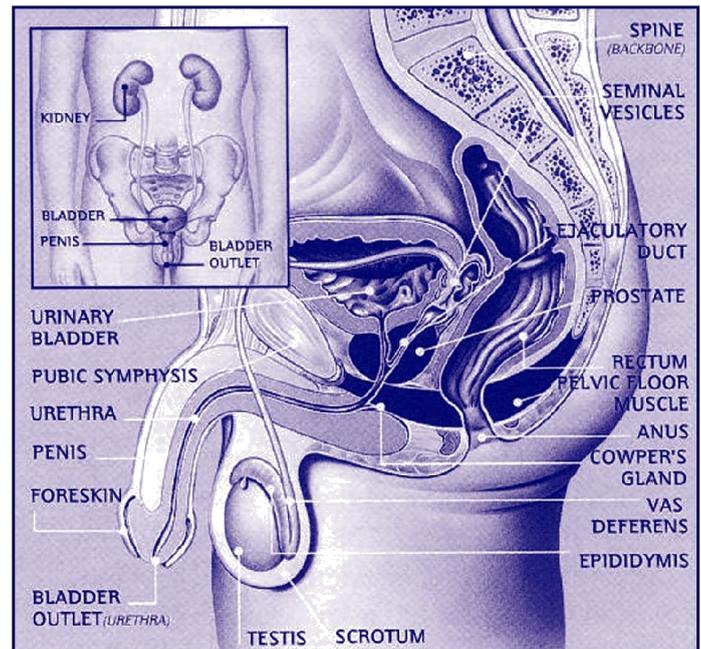
In most this is an entirely benign process which is so common that it can be almost considered a normal part of getting older. In only a very small number of men is there a cancerous growth of the prostate.

The purpose of the bladder is to store urine until it is convenient to pass water. Because of its position, the enlarging prostate begins to block the outlet from the bladder (like tightening a collar) until it interferes with the flow of urine through the bladder outlet (urethra).

How will I know if my prostate is causing trouble?

Sometimes the first thing you notice is difficulty in actually passing water. The flow is slow and it may be troublesome to get started especially if there has been a delay in getting to the toilet. You may find yourself waiting several minutes for the flow to begin and even straining produces only a feeble dribble. It is often worse at night.

Another sign of prostate trouble is the 'jumpy' bladder. The urge to go comes more and more often. Your friends begin to remark on the frequent visits to the Gents. Turning on a tap, turning the key in the door on returning home and getting up in the morning may trigger the bladder so



strongly that it leaks before you can get to the toilet. Your sleep is increasingly disturbed by the need to pass water and your activity may be restricted by the need to be in constant reach of the toilet. If the bladder is really full it may overflow at night, so that you wet the bed and it may cause problems by back pressure on the kidneys. You may even get a complete blockage (retention) and need emergency treatment - a painful and alarming way to find that you have prostate trouble!

What should I do?

The first thing you need to do is make an appointment with your doctor or practice nurse to find out if you have an enlarged prostate. If things are not too bad, your doctor may just monitor you. On the other hand, if you have symptoms which are interfering with your life, or the bladder is really failing to empty, it is probably best to have something done.

Your doctor will decide if you should see a urologist, a surgeon who specialises in 'waterworks' problems.

What will the urologist do?

The urologist will want to find out the extent of your prostate trouble. The story you give and a medical examination by the urologist will provide a lot of help but most of the useful information comes from a set of routine tests.

These usually include a urine test (to look for infection), an X-ray or ultrasound scan (to check how well the bladder and kidneys are coping), blood tests, and a urine flow test to see how fast you pass your water.

When these tests are done the urologist will usually be able to tell you whether you need treatment for your prostate and whether there is any hint of something more serious.

Pelvic floor exercises for men

Many men experience a variety of problems with their urinary system, which can lead to unwanted leakage of urine. This can be due to a weakness of the muscles of the pelvic floor or following treatment for an enlarged prostate.

You can help improve control of your bladder and bowel by doing exercises to strengthen your pelvic floor muscles. Please contact B&BC for a factsheet on 'Pelvic floor exercises for men'.

Bladder and Bowel Community

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