



Prostate Problems

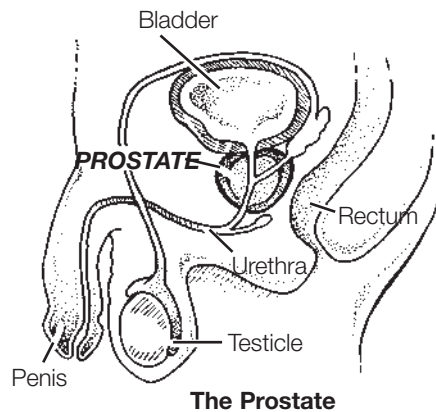
A man's prostate gland sits underneath his bladder, wrapped around the urethra (urine tube). It makes fluid to support and protect sperm. Prostate problems often cause the prostate gland to enlarge, interfering with bladder function and urine flow. Prostate problems can be helped with medicines and by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

Signs and symptoms

Symptoms 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
- Painful urination
- Painful ejaculation.



The Prostate

Note: These symptoms are not always due to changes in the prostate and men with prostate problems do not always have these symptoms.

Prostatitis

Prostatitis is inflammation or swelling of the prostate gland and it can be very painful. It mostly affects men under 50 years of age and is mostly caused by bacterial infection. Prostatitis can also occur without bacterial infection.

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

Important

Consult a doctor if you have:

- Any of the signs and symptoms listed on this card
- Blood in your urine
- Burning, stinging or pain when passing urine
- Fever, chills or back pain and urine problems
- Problems with getting or maintaining an erection
- Painful erections
- A father or brother who has had prostate cancer.

Benign prostatic hyperplasia (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 (to some degree) as they age. It is not life-threatening, but can interfere with urine flow.

Treatment of BPH includes:

- 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.
- 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.
- Some complementary/herbal medicines may relieve symptoms of BPH – ask a pharmacist or doctor.

Prostate cancer

Diagnosed mainly in men over 50 years of age, this 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.

Your **Self Care** Pharmacist

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.

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

- Consult a doctor if you have any of the symptoms of prostate problems.
- If 50 years of age or older, ask a doctor about having regular prostate checks.
- If anyone in your family has had prostate cancer, start having regular prostate checks after 40 years of age.
- Drinking less tea, coffee and alcohol may help urinary symptoms.

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 330 066 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.

Pharmacy Self Care Support – phone 1300 369 772 and ask for the Pharmacy Self Care Field Officer.

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

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