

A Woman's Guide to Enlarged Prostate

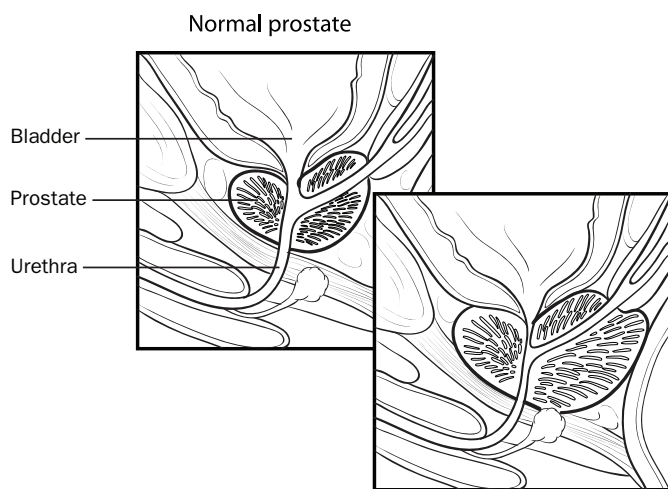
FACT SHEET

What is the prostate?

Only men have prostates. A healthy prostate is about the same size as a walnut. Located below the bladder, the prostate surrounds the urethra, the tube that carries urine from the bladder out the penis. The prostate's main job is to help in the creation of semen, the fluid that helps protect the sperm when a man ejaculates.

What is an enlarged prostate or benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH)?

Prostate enlargement is common as men age. Because of the prostate's location, some men will have lower urinary tract symptoms (LUTS) when the prostate is enlarged. An enlarged prostate affects at least half of men over age 50. LUTS caused by enlarged prostates can be a problem for some men as they age.



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Enlarged prostate or BPH symptoms in men may include:

- frequent urge to urinate
- getting up to urinate two or more times a night
- difficulty emptying his bladder
- having a weak urine stream that may start and stop
- having trouble starting to urinate
- only urinating a little bit each time he goes to the bathroom
- leaking or dribbling urine after going to the bathroom
- feeling like he still has to urinate, even after he's gone to the bathroom
- feeling a strong, sudden urge to urinate

How would I know if he has an enlarged prostate?

The AUA recommends men over the age of 40 should have regular prostate exams. His doctor can perform a digital rectal exam (DRE), a prostate specific antigen (PSA) blood test, and evaluate any urinary symptoms he may have. Other urological conditions may lead to similar symptoms. Many men with an enlarged prostate don't have any signs or symptoms. His doctor can tell if he has an enlarged prostate.

What causes an enlarged prostate?

Experts are still learning what causes an enlarged prostate. Scientists have found that the hormone dihydrotestosterone (DHT) may be the number one cause of enlarged prostate. Men who have close relatives with an enlarged prostate are more likely to have it. Obesity may also raise a man's risk. Aging is one of the biggest risk factors for an enlarged prostate.

Can an enlarged prostate or BPH get worse?

The prostate can continue to grow over time. In some men, urinary symptoms may develop and become worse. Enlarged prostate can lead to bladder damage, infection and even kidney damage. In serious cases, the prostate may get so enlarged that urine flow is completely blocked. This condition is known as acute urinary retention (AUR) which needs emergency treatment.

How is an enlarged prostate treated?

There are several options to treat men with bothersome urinary symptoms and enlarged prostates. To find out if one of the many types of treatments is good treatment for his prostate condition, encourage him to talk with his health care provider.

- **Watchful waiting** - If his urinary symptoms are not bothering him that much, he and his doctor may choose watchful waiting which involves regular exams to check his prostate.
- **Medicines** - Two types of prescription drugs treat the symptoms of enlarged prostates: the 5-alpha reductase inhibitor (5ARI) medicine helps shrink the prostate, and the alpha-blocker drugs relax the muscle of the bladder and prostate muscles to improve urine flow and reduce uncomfortable symptoms.
- **Minimally Invasive Treatments** - These treatments include the use of lasers (holmium laser enucleation or photo vaporization) and heat treatments (transurethral microwave therapy and transurethral needle ablation) which help eliminate the prostate tissue that is blocking the urethra.
- **Surgery** - For some men with enlarged prostates, surgery may help with bothersome symptoms. Surgery may include a transurethral resection or TURP (the prostate's inner core is removed), a transurethral incision or TUIP (to reduce pressure on the urethra) or a prostatectomy (to actually remove the prostate).

What are the side effects from treatment for an enlarged prostate/BPH?

A man should talk with his doctor about what treatment might work best for him. The treatment his doctor suggests will partly depend on his symptoms and the size of his prostate. Regular visits to the doctor are the key to monitoring an enlarged prostate. His doctor needs to know about any changes in his symptoms. If he is taking medicine, the doctor will want to know how it's working or if it's causing side effects. If his symptoms get worse, he may need a new approach.

He should tell his doctor about any:

- changes in his symptoms
- side effects from medicines
- sexual problems, like low sex drive or trouble having an erection

Alternative Medicine

You may have heard about some herbal or alternative medicines used for an enlarged prostate. There is no convincing evidence that these agents help prostate problems. Men should always check with their doctor before using an alternative treatment. Some herbs, minerals and other supplements can interact with drugs or foods. They can also cause side effects. Just because something is natural does not mean it is safe.

For more information about prostate health and other urologic conditions or to locate a urologist in your area, please visit

www.UrologyHealth.org or call 1-800-828-7866.

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1000 Corporate Boulevard
Linthicum, MD 21090

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