

THE PROSTATE AND BLADDER PROBLEMS

Prostate problems can cause poor bladder health

The Prostate

The prostate is a gland that only men have. It is about the size of a walnut and sits below the neck of the bladder. It wraps around the urethra (urine tube). The prostate makes a milky fluid, which is part of semen. This fluid feeds the sperm.

It is normal for the prostate gland to get bigger as men get older. For some men this can cause bladder problems. The changes to the prostate gland happens slowly over many years.

Poor bladder control can also happen due to other health issues. Men with poor bladder control can be upset and embarrassed by it. Talk to your doctor or nurse continence specialist if you have changes in your bladder control.

You should also talk to your doctor about any concerns you have about your prostate gland.

What are some common prostate problems?

⇒ Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (BPH)

This is when the prostate gets gradually larger. This often starts in middle age. Later in life about one in four men will need treatment for this problem. There are many successful treatments for prostate problems. BPH does not lead to cancer.

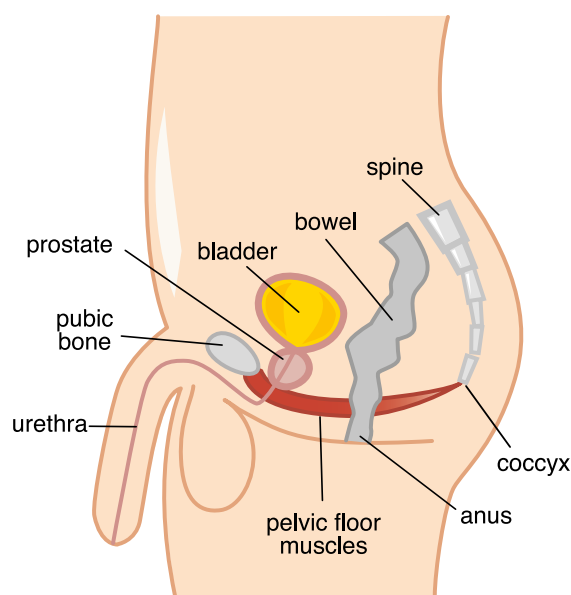
⇒ Prostate Cancer

Prostate cancer is often found before you have any warning signs. Your doctor may find it with a blood test called a PSA. They may find changes in your prostate with a digital rectal examination. This is a common cancer. There are treatments available which you can discuss with your doctor.

⇒ Prostatitis

Prostatitis is swelling and soreness of the prostate gland. This may be due to a bladder infection. It is more common in young men.

Talk to your doctor if you have any pain or discomfort when you empty your bladder.



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How do I know if I have a prostate problem?

If you have one or more of the following symptoms, you may have a prostate problem:

- ⇒ trouble starting to pass urine
- ⇒ slow urine stream once started
- ⇒ needing to pass urine more often through the day or night
- ⇒ leaking after passing urine or between visits to the toilet
- ⇒ needing to pass urine again soon after going to the toilet
- ⇒ feeling an urgent need to pass urine
- ⇒ burning or pain when passing urine
- ⇒ blood in urine
- ⇒ feeling that the bladder is not fully empty after going to the toilet.

Some of these problems may not be due to the prostate. Some medicines may also cause the bladder to store up urine. Your doctor or nurse continence specialist can help you find the cause of your problem.



How can my prostate cause bladder problems?

Narrowing of the urethra (urine tube)

As the prostate grows larger, it may press on the urethra. This can stop the bladder from emptying, not allowing urine to pass. Urine may get stored up until it starts to leak out. If this happens, see a doctor straight away.

An overactive bladder and urgency

This can be caused if the bladder has to work extra hard to push the urine through a very narrow urethra. An enlarged prostate restricts the size of the urethra. An overactive bladder can tighten without your control. This can cause an urgent need to pass urine.

Surgery

After surgery to widen the narrow tube of the urethra, you may still feel an urgent need to pass urine. Urgency could get worse until the bladder goes back to normal. This can take a few weeks. Surgery for prostate problems could damage the muscles and nerves of the urethra. This can cause poor bladder control. These problems are almost always short-lived. However, major surgery for prostate cancer can lead to long term bladder control problems.

How can poor bladder control be treated?

Your doctor or nurse continence specialist will look to find the cause of your poor bladder control. The treatment for your problem will depend on its cause.

They will check for such things as prostate disease, infection and diabetes. They will also want to know what medicines you are taking. Some medicines can cause bladder problems.

There are a few different ways poor bladder control can be treated.

⇒ Talk with your doctor

Together you may decide that you do not need any treatment. Poor bladder control can get better with time. It can improve with simple changes to your daily habits.

⇒ Medicines

There are a number of medicines that can help with bladder control. Ask your doctor about these.

⇒ Prostate surgery

If your prostate is the problem, then surgery can remove all or part of the prostate gland. The type of surgery depends on what is wrong with your prostate gland.

⇒ Bladder training

A bladder training program may help the bladder to hold more urine without leaks or urgent feelings. This also helps those with an overactive bladder.

⇒ Pelvic floor muscle exercises

Pelvic floor muscle exercises strengthens the muscles. These muscles control how well the bladder and bowel work. Learn how to exercise your muscles before surgery and start pelvic floor muscle exercises as soon as you can after surgery.

⇒ Continence products

There are a wide range of continence products to help cope with urine leaks.

Call the **National Continence Helpline 1800 33 00 66** or visit the website for more information on any of the above.

Make sure you know enough about:

- ⇒ what the problem is
- ⇒ what your treatment options are
- ⇒ how well they work
- ⇒ what might go wrong.

With your doctor's help you can choose the treatment that is best for you.



Call the National Continence Helpline on 1800 33 00 66 (free call)

Speak with a nurse continence specialist for free and confidential advice on resources, details for local continence services, products and financial assistance.

For more information, you can also visit:

continence.org.au

toiletmap.gov.au

health.gov.au/bladder-bowel

This fact sheet is intended as a general overview only and is not a substitute for professional assessment and care.

This fact sheet is available in other languages from continence.org.au

