

Know your prostate

A guide to common prostate problems



**PROSTATE
CANCER UK**

About this booklet

Problems going for a pee (urinating) are common as you get older. For men, these can be a sign of a problem with the prostate. This booklet tells you what the prostate is and what it does. We describe the three most common prostate problems that affect men – an enlarged prostate, prostatitis and prostate cancer.

At the end of this guide you will find details of other publications, sources of help and a list of medical terms used in this booklet. If you think you might have a problem with your prostate, you can talk to your doctor (GP) or call our Specialist Nurses on our confidential helpline.

The following symbols appear throughout the booklet to guide you to sources of further information:



Prostate Cancer UK Specialist Nurse helpline



Prostate Cancer UK publications

If you would like to know more about anything you read in this booklet, you can call our Specialist Nurses on our confidential helpline.

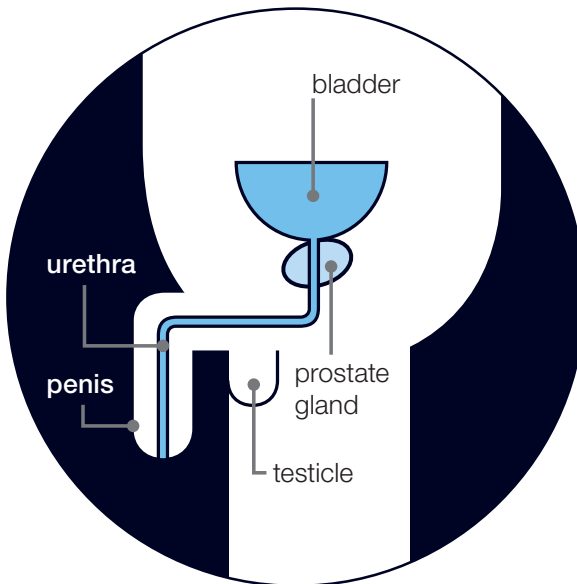
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What is the prostate?

Only men have a prostate. The prostate is usually the size and shape of a walnut. It sits underneath the bladder and surrounds the urethra, which is the tube men urinate and ejaculate through.

The prostate is a gland. Its main job is to make most of the fluid that carries sperm, called semen.

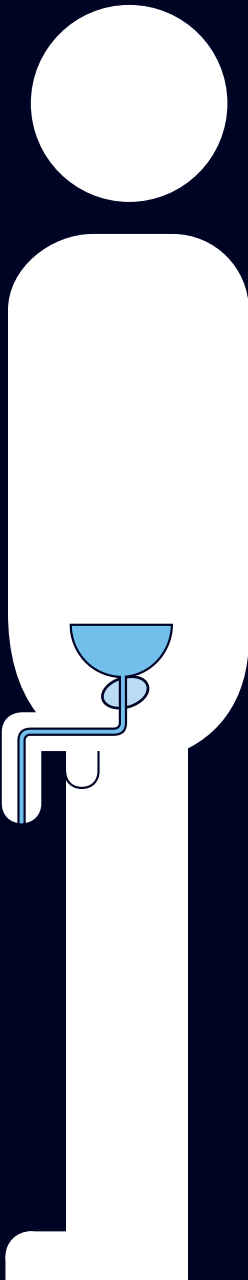


What can go wrong?

The three most common prostate problems are:

- an enlarged prostate – this is the most common prostate problem
- prostatitis – an inflammation or infection in the prostate
- prostate cancer.

You can find out more about these conditions further on in this booklet.



What changes should I look out for?

If you have problems urinating, this could be a sign of a problem in your prostate. This is because the prostate surrounds the tube you pass urine through (the urethra).

For some men, problems urinating could be a sign that they have a prostate problem, usually an enlarged prostate. Early prostate cancer doesn't usually cause problems urinating. Read more about prostate cancer on page 11.

Problems peeing: what is normal?

Your bladder should be able to hold up to three-quarters of a pint (about 430ml). Most people go for a pee about four to seven times each day, depending on how much they drink.

You should know when your bladder is full and have enough time to find a toilet and empty it completely every time you urinate. If your bladder is working normally, you shouldn't leak urine.

Most people can sleep six to eight hours without having to go for a pee. This will be affected by how recently you had a drink before going to sleep. And as we get older, the amount of urine we produce overnight increases. Middle aged and older men often wake to urinate once in the early morning hours.

Problems urinating are not always to do with the prostate. They could be caused by another health problem, such as diabetes, or by medicines you are taking, such as anti-depressants. Your lifestyle can also cause problems urinating – for example if you often drink large amounts of fluid or drink a lot of alcohol, caffeine or fizzy drinks, which can irritate the bladder.

If you are having problems urinating, it is still a good idea to get things checked out, even if just to put your mind at rest. Symptoms to look out for include:

- needing to go for a pee more often, especially at night – for example if you often need to go again two hours after urinating
- difficulty starting to urinate
- straining or taking a long time to finish urinating
- a weak flow when you urinate
- a feeling that your bladder has not emptied properly
- needing to rush to the toilet – you may occasionally leak before you get there
- dribbling urine.

Less common symptoms include:

- pain when urinating
- pain when ejaculating
- problems getting or keeping an erection*
- blood in your urine or semen.

* Erection problems are not common symptoms of a prostate problem and are more often caused by other health conditions.

You might find it helpful to tick any symptoms that you have and take this booklet with you if you are going to see your GP.

Problems urinating are common in older men but this doesn't mean you have to put up with them. There are ways to treat them or manage them yourself.

If you have any of the symptoms above, you should think about visiting your GP. Read more about visiting the GP on page 16. You can also talk to a Specialist Nurse by calling our confidential helpline.



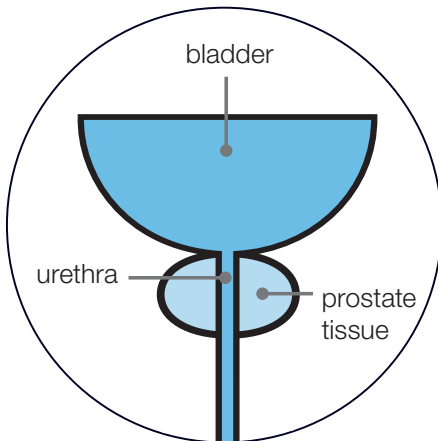
What is an enlarged prostate?

Benign prostatic enlargement (BPE) is the medical term used to describe an enlarged prostate. It means a non-cancerous enlargement of the prostate gland.

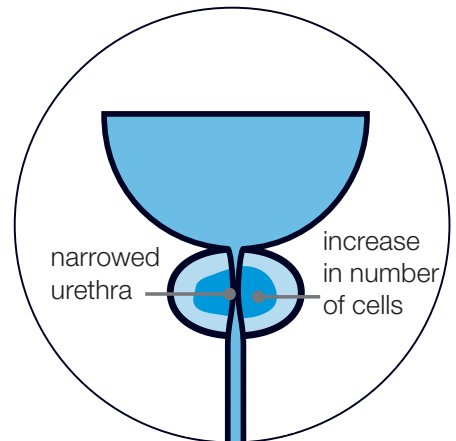
You might also hear it called benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH). Hyperplasia means an increase in the number of cells. It's this increase in cells that causes the prostate to grow.

An enlarged prostate is common for men after the age of about 50. About 4 out of every 10 men (40 per cent) over the age of 50 and 3 out of 4 men (75 per cent) in their 70s have urinary symptoms that are caused by an enlarged prostate.

A normal prostate gland



An enlarged prostate gland



Having an enlarged prostate is **not** the same as having cancer.

An enlarged prostate is the most common cause of urinary problems in men as they get older.

Having an enlarged prostate affects men in different ways. Some men are able to cope with their symptoms well and do not need treatment.

Having an enlarged prostate does not increase your risk of getting prostate cancer. However, men can have an enlarged prostate and prostate cancer at the same time.

If your symptoms are not affecting your day-to-day life and there are no complications, your GP or specialist may advise you to wait and see how your condition develops.

How can I help myself?

Making some simple changes to your lifestyle, such as avoiding alcohol and caffeine and drinking less in the evening can help relieve mild urinary problems. If these changes don't help, your doctor may also prescribe medicines or recommend surgery.



Find out more in our booklet **Enlarged prostate: A guide to diagnosis and treatment.**

What is prostatitis?

Prostatitis can be caused by either an infection or an inflammation of the prostate. It is not a form of cancer.

Prostatitis can cause a wide variety of symptoms, which differ from man to man and include those described on page 7. In severe cases it can cause fever and sweating and needs treatment in hospital.

Prostatitis is a common condition. It can affect men of any age but it's most common in younger and middle aged men, typically between 30 and 50.

There are different types of prostatitis, which are treated in different ways. Some men take antibiotics or other medicines called alpha-blockers.

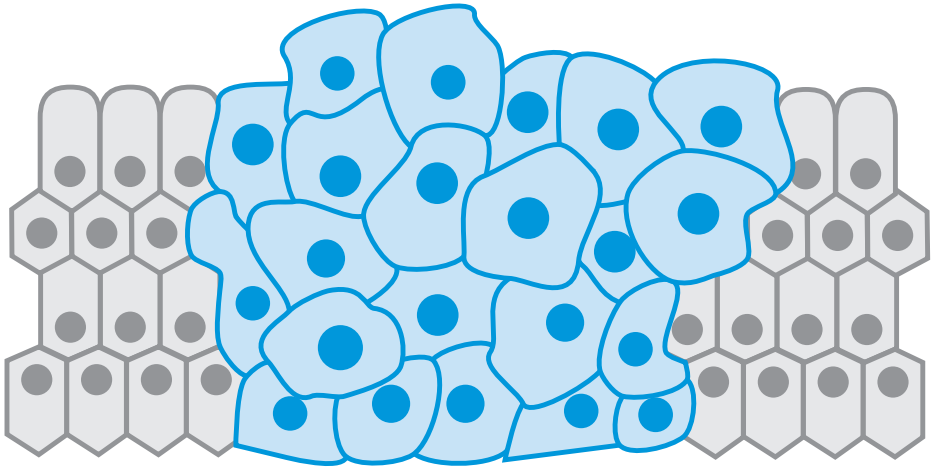
 Read our booklet **Prostatitis: A guide to infection and inflammation of the prostate** for more information.

What is prostate cancer?

Normally the growth of all cells is carefully controlled in the body. As cells die, they are replaced in an orderly fashion. Cancer can develop when cells start to grow in an uncontrolled way. If this happens in the prostate, then prostate cancer can develop.

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men in the UK.

How cancer develops



Normal cells

Cancer cells growing in
an uncontrolled way

Who is at risk of prostate cancer?

In the UK, about 1 in 8 men (13 per cent) will get prostate cancer at some point in their lives. There are things that may increase your chance of getting prostate cancer.

Age

Prostate cancer mainly affects men over the age of 50 and your risk increases with age. The average age for men to be diagnosed with prostate cancer is between 70 and 74 years. If you are under 50 then your risk of getting prostate cancer is very low – it's possible, but it's rare.

Family history and genetics

Inside every cell of our body is a set of instructions called genes. These are inherited from our parents. Genes control how the body grows, works and what it looks like. Researchers have found some characteristics in genes that might be passed on through your parents and could increase your risk of developing prostate cancer. Only 5 to 10 per cent of prostate cancers are thought to be strongly linked to an inherited risk.

- You are two and a half times more likely to get prostate cancer if your father or brother has been diagnosed with it, compared with a man who has no affected relatives.
- There may be a higher chance of you developing prostate cancer if your relative was under 60 when he was diagnosed or if you have more than one close relative with prostate cancer.

- Your risk of prostate cancer might be increased if you have close relatives with breast cancer – if their breast cancer is linked to faults in the genes BRCA1 or BRCA2.

If you have relatives with prostate cancer or breast cancer and are worried about this, speak to your GP. Although the risk is increased, it doesn't necessarily mean you will get prostate cancer.

Ethnicity

Black men are more likely to get prostate cancer than men of other ethnic backgrounds. In the UK, about 1 in 4 Black men will get prostate cancer at some point in their lives. The reasons for this are not yet clear but might be linked to genes.

Lifestyle

No one knows how to prevent prostate cancer, but diet and a healthy lifestyle may be important in protecting against the disease.



You can read more in our leaflet **Diet, activity and your risk of prostate cancer**.

What are the symptoms of prostate cancer?

Prostate cancer can grow slowly or very quickly. Most prostate cancer is slow-growing to start with and may never cause any symptoms or problems in a man's lifetime. But some men will have cancer that is more aggressive or 'high risk'. This needs treatment to help prevent or delay it spreading outside the prostate.

If a man does have symptoms, such as problems urinating, they might be mild and happen over many years. For some men, the first noticeable symptoms are from prostate cancer which has spread to their bones. If this happens, you might notice pain in your back, hips or pelvis that was not there before. These symptoms could be caused by other problems such as general aches and pains or arthritis, but it is still a good idea to get them checked out by your GP if you are worried.

Most men with early prostate cancer do not have any symptoms.

What treatments are there for prostate cancer?

There are several treatments available for prostate cancer. Some treatments aim to get rid of the cancer completely, others to control the cancer. The stage of cancer and each man's preferences will affect which treatment they decide to have. If a man has slow growing cancer that is not likely to cause any problems in their lifetime, they might be able to delay treatment or avoid treatment altogether.

If you would like more information about prostate cancer and its treatment, we have a range of free publications available. See page 23 of this booklet for details.

What should I do next?

If you have some of the symptoms on page 7 or if you think you may be more at risk of prostate cancer, you may want to get further advice or a check-up.

You could:



- call our Specialist Nurses on our confidential helpline.
- go and see your GP.

What if I am not registered with a GP?

If you are not registered with a GP you could use the NHS Choices website or ring NHS Direct or NHS 24 to find one in your area (contact details at the end of this booklet). You could also ask family or friends who live near you which GP surgery they go to.

What if I don't have time to see a GP?

Some GP surgeries are now open in the evenings or weekends, so you should be able to see the GP at a time that is right for you. There might also be an NHS walk-in centre nearby, where you will not need an appointment. Use the NHS Choices website or ring NHS Direct or NHS 24 to find one in your area.

What will happen at the GP surgery?

If you are having symptoms, your GP or practice nurse will ask you about them, how long you have had them and whether they are getting worse over time.

If you are not sure how to explain your symptoms or concerns to your GP or practice nurse, take this booklet in with you

They might ask you to fill out a questionnaire about your symptoms to see how much bother they are causing in your daily life. There are also a few tests that doctors can carry out to find out if you have a prostate problem.

Your GP might do some of these tests or you may need to visit a specialist doctor (urologist) or nurse at the hospital. Ask your GP for more details about which tests you will have and what they involve.

 You can also call our Specialist Nurses on our confidential helpline.

You might not have all of the following tests.

Urine test

This involves you giving a urine sample to check for any infection that could be causing you problems urinating. This can also help rule out any problems with your kidneys or diabetes. You might also have a blood test to check that your kidneys are working properly.




**I visited my GP after watching
a television programme
about prostate cancer and
thought I could be at risk.**

A personal experience

PSA test

The PSA test is a blood test that measures the total amount of prostate specific antigen (PSA) in your blood. PSA is a protein produced by cells in the prostate. Your PSA level rises as you get older. Prostate problems such as an enlarged prostate and prostatitis, as well as prostate cancer, can cause your PSA level to rise. A PSA test alone cannot tell you whether you have prostate cancer. Your GP will need to look at your PSA level together with other test results, like a digital rectal examination (see below).

 All men aged over 50 are entitled to have a PSA test as long as they have first talked through the pros and cons with their GP. For more information, read our booklet: **Understanding the PSA test: A guide for men concerned about prostate cancer.**

Digital rectal examination (DRE)

The doctor or specialist nurse may feel the back surface of your prostate for any hard or irregular areas and to estimate its size. This is called a digital rectal examination (DRE).

If you have a DRE, the doctor will ask you to lie on your side, on an examination table, with your knees brought up towards your chest. The doctor will slide their finger into your back passage. He or she will wear gloves and put some gel onto their finger to make it more comfortable. This might be uncomfortable, but it shouldn't be painful. Some men understandably find it embarrassing but the check will be over quickly.

If the prostate gland feels larger than expected for your age, this could be a sign of an enlarged prostate. A prostate with hard bumpy areas might suggest prostate cancer.

You are more likely to have the following tests at the hospital.

Urine flow test

This test involves urinating into a machine that measures the speed of your urine flow. If you are urinating slowly, it may mean that your prostate is pressing on the urethra. You'll need a full bladder for the test, but your doctor and nurse will tell you how much you need to drink beforehand.

Ultrasound scan

An ultrasound scan can show if your bladder is emptying properly. You might have the scan after the urine flow test, when you have finished urinating. The scan will show whether any urine is left in the bladder.

Worried about going to the GP?

Some men worry about going to the GP because they do not want to have intimate examinations, or think that the tests could be painful. It is natural to feel embarrassed, but any examinations should be over quickly and the doctor or nurse is used to seeing the human body. If you would prefer to see a male GP, ask for one when you make the appointment.

None of these tests should be painful, although some men find the DRE uncomfortable. Remember, the tests are not being done unnecessarily – they will make sure that your doctor or nurse can get the best idea about whether you have a problem that needs treating.

What will the test results tell me?

It can take one or two weeks to get the results of any tests you have had. If your test results suggest that you have a prostate problem, your doctor will discuss your treatment options with you or refer you to a urologist at the hospital.



For more detailed information about treatment options for an enlarged prostate, prostatitis or prostate cancer, you can call our Specialist Nurses on our confidential helpline or visit our website at **prostatecanceruk.org**

Your GP might also refer you to a urologist if they think that you may have a problem with your kidneys or bladder, or if you have urinary problems that are very severe and are causing you a lot of bother.

PSA test results

If you have a PSA test, your GP will consider these results alongside other information before deciding on the next step. They will look at:

- results from a digital rectal examination (DRE)
- risk factors such as age, ethnicity and family history
- other health problems or things that may have affected the results
- if you have had other tests like a prostate biopsy in the past. If you have had negative prostate biopsies in the past you may be less likely to have aggressive prostate cancer.

The GP should discuss your test results and these other issues with you. They might advise you that you don't need any further tests, or that you should have another PSA test in the near future. If they think you may have prostate problems, they might make an appointment for you to see a urologist at a hospital.



If you want to see a urologist but your GP has not referred you to one, they should be happy to discuss this with you. Read more in **Understanding the PSA test: A guide for men concerned about prostate cancer.**

It is natural to feel worried or embarrassed about having tests and check-ups. But don't let that stop you going to your GP. Remember, the tests give your GP the best idea about whether you have a problem that needs treating.

Medical terms used in this booklet

- Biopsy** The removal of small samples of tissue to be looked at under a microscope to check for signs of cancer. A biopsy of the prostate gland may be used to help diagnose prostate cancer.
- DRE** Digital rectal examination (DRE). A physical examination in which a doctor or nurse feels the prostate gland with a gloved, lubricated finger through the back passage (rectum). The DRE is used to help diagnose prostate problems and prostate cancer.
- GP** General practitioner (GP). A doctor who deals with a range of medical problems in people of all ages. Also known as a family doctor.

PSA Prostate specific antigen (PSA). A protein that is produced by the prostate gland. It is normal for all men to have a small amount of PSA in their blood. A raised PSA level can be due to a variety of reasons including age, infection, an enlarged prostate and prostate cancer.

PSA test A test that measures the amount of PSA in the blood. It can be used alongside other tests to help diagnose prostate problems and to monitor prostate cancer growth and the effectiveness of treatment.

Urethra In men, the tube that carries urine from the bladder, and semen from the reproductive system, through the penis and out of the body.

Urologist A doctor who specialises in the urinary and reproductive systems. Urologists are also surgeons.



We also have a separate Tool Kit fact sheet, **A-Z of medical words**, which explains more words that you may hear or read when you are finding out about prostate cancer.

More information from us

The Tool Kit

The Tool Kit information pack contains fact sheets that explain how prostate cancer is diagnosed, how it is treated and how it may affect your lifestyle. Each treatment fact sheet also includes a list of suggested questions to ask your doctor.

Leaflets and booklets

Other leaflets and booklets about prostate cancer and prostate problems can be ordered free of charge from Prostate Cancer UK.

To order publications:

- Call us on **0800 074 8383**
- Email us at **literature@prostatecanceruk.org**

You can also download and order all of our publications from our website at **prostatecanceruk.org**

Call our Specialist Nurses

If you want to talk about prostate cancer or other prostate problems, call our Specialist Nurses in confidence. You can also email the nurses using the contact form on our website. Visit **prostatecanceruk.org** and click on 'support'.



**Speak to our
Specialist Nurses**

0800 074 8383*

prostatecanceruk.org

* Calls are recorded for training purposes only. Confidentiality is maintained between callers and Prostate Cancer UK.

Other useful organisations

The following organisations can give you support and information on prostate problems, symptoms and treatment:

NHS 24

08454 24 24 24

www.nhs24.com

Health information and self care advice for people in Scotland.

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk

Provides information to support you in making decisions about your own health, including an A-Z of treatments and conditions, and information on NHS health services in your local area.

NHS Direct

0845 4647

www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

For health advice or information on NHS services, such as GPs in your local area.

Patient UK

www.patient.co.uk

This website contains information that GPs use with members of the public. It includes information on prostate problems.

About Prostate Cancer UK

Prostate Cancer UK fights to help more men survive prostate cancer and enjoy a better life. We support men by providing vital information and services. We find answers by funding research into causes and treatments and we lead change, raising the profile of the disease and improving care. We believe that men deserve better.

At Prostate Cancer UK, we take great care to provide up-to-date, unbiased and accurate facts about prostate cancer. We hope these will add to the medical advice you have had and help you to make decisions. Our services are not intended to replace advice from your doctor.

References to sources of information used in the production of this booklet are available at prostatecanceruk.org

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- Prostate Cancer UK Specialist Nurses
- Prostate Cancer UK Volunteers



Donate today – help others like you

Did you find this information useful? Would you like to help others in your situation access the facts they need? Every year, 40,000 men face a prostate cancer diagnosis. Thanks to our generous supporters, we offer information free to all who need it. If you would like to help us continue this service, please consider making a donation. Your gift could fund the following services:

- £10 could buy a Tool Kit – a set of fact sheets, tailored to the needs of each man with vital information on diagnosis, treatment and lifestyle.
- £25 could give a man diagnosed with prostate cancer unlimited time to talk over treatment options with one of our Specialist Nurses.

To make a donation of any amount, please call us on **0800 082 1616**, visit **prostatecanceruk.org/donations** or **text PROSTATE to 70004***. There are many other ways to support us. For more details please visit **prostatecanceruk.org/get-involved**

*You can donate up to £10 via SMS and we will receive 100% of your donation. Texts are charged at your standard rate. For full terms and conditions and more information, please visit prostatecanceruk.org/terms



The quotes with the photos are not the words of the people who appear.



**Speak to our
Specialist Nurses**

0800 074 8383*

prostatecanceruk.org



Men United v Prostate Cancer **We can win this**

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Call our Specialist Nurses from Mon to Fri 9am - 6pm, Wed 10am - 8pm

* Calls are recorded for training purposes only.

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