

A simple guide to the prostate

If you are reading this because you have worries or concerns about yourself or someone you know then the best thing to do is make an appointment with your GP or encourage that person to see their GP to talk over their symptoms.

www.prostatescotland.org.uk

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What is the prostate?

Only men (and those born biologically male) have a prostate. It is usually the size of a walnut. After the age of 40, it slowly starts to grow or enlarge. The prostate feels soft, elastic like, smooth and even all over.

Where is the prostate?

The prostate is inside the pelvis, just below the bladder. So, the prostate can't be seen or physically examined from outside the body.

It wraps around the tube called the urethra (water-pipe) that allows urine to flow out of the bladder and for semen to pass out through the penis.

What does the prostate do?

The prostate is part of the male reproductive system. Its main role is to supply a thick clear fluid that helps to nourish and protect sperm during sexual intercourse. Prostate Specific Antigen or PSA is made in the prostate. Because some PSA leaks out of the prostate, it's normal to find PSA in a man's blood. This can be measured and is called the PSA level

What are the most common symptoms or signs of prostate problems?

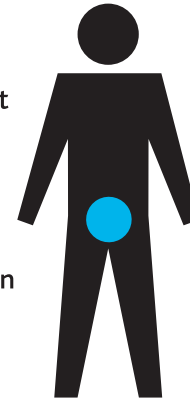
Having to go to the toilet *quickly and more often than before* . Getting up to pee several times during the night .

Is this like you or someone you know?

Taking longer to empty the bladder with a weak and dribbly flow of urine and perhaps having some pain when you pee . Having to stand and wait over the toilet and straining to start to pee with your flow stopping and starting when you pee .

If this sounds familiar then it is time to make an appointment to see your GP

Why not try our symptom checker on
www.prostatescotland.org.uk



So what could this mean?

As men get older, they may notice that they develop problems in passing urine. It doesn't mean that nothing can be done to help as there are treatments available. So, don't put off going to see your GP.

There are three conditions that may affect your prostate.

Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (BPH)

This is a very common condition. After the age of around 40, the prostate begins to get bigger or enlarge. From around 50, this enlarging may start to become troublesome.

As the prostate gets bigger, it may squeeze the urethra, making this tube narrower and so slow down your flow of urine. Sometimes as the prostate slowly gets bigger you may notice that your symptoms gradually get worse disturbing your sleep and affecting your day-to-day life.

The good news is that the symptoms linked to BPH can be treated, so it's important to make an appointment with your GP. Once your GP has diagnosed BPH then they will talk about which treatment may be best for you.

- Lifestyle changes and keeping an eye on your health and symptoms;
- If your symptoms change or don't improve, a medication may be prescribed to help with your symptoms;
- A surgical operation (called a TURP), surgical treatment using lasers or small permanent implants.

With any of these treatments you should notice an improvement in your symptoms.

Having an enlarged prostate (BPH) isn't the same as having prostate cancer and doesn't mean that there is a greater risk of getting prostate cancer.

A leaflet and booklet on BPH are available on our website or by contacting us for a copy.

Prostatitis

Prostatitis means that there is inflammation, irritation or infection in the prostate. Prostatitis is the most common prostate problem.

It can affect men of all ages but is found most frequently in men between the ages of 30 – 50.

There are four different types of prostatitis. As well as the symptoms already given, when prostatitis develops suddenly it can cause severe pain, fever, chills and can sometimes stop a man peeing altogether. With this type of prostatitis it may mean urgent treatment in hospital.

Once your doctor has diagnosed your symptoms as prostatitis, there are treatments available depending on the type of prostatitis you have. Treatments include antibiotics, pain killers, laxatives.

It may be reassuring to know that prostatitis is not linked to prostate cancer and doesn't mean that there is a greater risk of getting prostate cancer.

A leaflet and booklet on prostatitis are available on our website or by contacting us for a copy.

Prostate cancer

Prostate cancer happens when cells in the prostate develop faults, grow faster than normal and in an uncontrolled way. This causes a growth called a tumour or cancer. As the prostate is inside the body, this growth can't be seen. Most prostate cancers grow slowly and for some men it doesn't have any effect on or shorten their life. However, for some men prostate cancer will need treated and there are many treatments available. When prostate cancer is found at an early stage and contained inside the prostate the aim is to treat with a curative intent. If it's found at a later stage then treatments are aimed at controlling the cancer.


Often in the early stages, prostate cancer causes no symptoms at all. If you have troublesome symptoms when you pee or if you are mid 40's and have a family history of prostate cancer it's important to make an appointment to see your GP.


A leaflet and booklets on prostate cancer are available on our website or by contacting us for a copy.


What should I do?

The most important thing you can do is to make an appointment to see your GP to find out what the problem might be and what can be done to help with your symptoms.


What might happen at the doctors?

 The doctor will ask how you are feeling and about your symptoms; what they are, how long you have had them and if you think they are getting worse and may ask you to fill in a questionnaire. There is a *symptom checker* on our website www.prostatescotland.org.uk that you can do at home, print off and take along with you when you see the GP and this may help you explain your symptoms;

 Your doctor may ask for a urine sample to check it for blood, glucose (a type of sugar) or for any signs of infection in your bladder or kidneys.

 **Digital rectal examination (DRE).** Your GP may want to examine your prostate. For this, you will be asked to lie on your side and your doctor will slide a gloved finger into your back passage checking the size and shape of your prostate and to feel for any lumps or hardened areas.

Although this might be a bit uncomfortable it shouldn't be painful and usually it doesn't take very long. Although, you may worry about this examination and may find it a bit embarrassing, your doctor will understand how you might be feeling.

 **PSA blood test.** This is a simple test to take a small sample of blood from your arm to measure the amount of PSA in your blood.

As a man gets older or if the prostate is damaged or enlarged more PSA can leak out into the blood so giving a higher PSA level. At the moment, the PSA test is the best test available to check for any problems in the prostate. However, there are benefits but there are also drawbacks in having this test and you can discuss this with your GP. The PSA test is best used as a guide for the doctor to make a diagnosis on what might be going on.

For more information on the PSA test, check out our website or our PSA leaflet to help you decide whether or not to have this test. Talking it over with your GP can also help.

Depending on the results of your tests and examinations with your GP, you may be referred to hospital to see a doctor who specialises in this type of condition called a Urologist. The Urologist may then want you to have more tests and examinations.

A word for partners, relatives and friends...

If you are reading this leaflet thinking that you recognise the symptoms in someone close to you, then the sooner he is checked out the better.

- Persuade him to make an appointment to see his GP very soon or make it for him and go with him;
- Encourage him to know and recognise the symptoms of prostate disease and prostate cancer so he can tell the doctor about his symptoms and how much they are bothering him;
- Get him to do the symptom checker on our website www.prostatescotland.org.uk

The information contained in this leaflet has been developed by Prostate Scotland and reviewed by its Advisory Group of doctors, nurses and patients. This leaflet is not intended to replace medical advice or seeing a doctor for specific illnesses or symptoms.

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