

Understanding enlarged prostate

Benign prostatic hyperplasia, sometimes called BPH or enlarged prostate, is a condition where a man's prostate gland gets larger. It is the most common prostate problem for men older than age 50. And, up to 90 percent of men over age 80 have it.

An enlarged prostate is not cancer, and for many men, it's not serious. But, it can cause some symptoms that are bothersome, such as urinating too frequently, trouble starting or stopping urinating and incontinence. This happens when the prostate gets too large and blocks the urethra, which lets urine out of the body. Or, it can stress the bladder as it tries to force urine past the blockage.

In rare cases, an enlarged prostate can cause serious problems such as kidney damage. That's why it's important to talk with a doctor about enlarged prostate and to follow your doctor's recommendations.

Don't ignore these signs

Enlarged prostate is usually not serious. But, some symptoms could signal a more serious problem. Get medical care right away if you notice any of these signs:

- Complete inability to urinate
- Fever and chills along with frequent and painful urination
- Blood in urine
- Severe pain in lower belly and/or urinary tract



How enlarged prostate is treated

Treatment is based on symptoms and lifestyle. Many men who have mild symptoms find that lifestyle changes can help. Some recommendations include:

- Drink less fluids, especially before bedtime or when you won't be near a bathroom.
- Avoid caffeine and/or alcohol. These can irritate the bladder and increase urination, which can worsen symptoms of an enlarged prostate.
- Avoid medications that can cause urination problems, including cold medicines with decongestants, antihistamines for allergies, diuretics and some antidepressants.
- Train your bladder, which means to gradually hold urine for longer periods.
- Exercises to strengthen muscles in the pelvic floor region of your body.
- Prevent and/or treat constipation, which can irritate a stressed bladder.

Lifestyle changes usually help improve quality of life for men with an enlarged prostate. But if they don't, your doctor may discuss medications or minimally invasive procedures. Surgery is usually not needed, but it is an option for severe cases.

Fortunately, this common health issue can be managed and treated. Get regular checkups with your doctor or urologist to keep symptoms under control.

Sources: National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases