

# **Enlarged Prostate (Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia)**

## **What is an enlarged prostate?**

An enlarged prostate is a prostate gland that is bigger than normal. The prostate gland is part of a man's reproductive system. It is about the size of a walnut and located between the bladder and the penis. The prostate gland surrounds the upper part of the urethra, the tube that carries urine from the bladder out through the penis. It makes fluid that nourishes sperm and helps carry it out of the body during sex. The prostate starts to get bigger at puberty, but it usually does not get big enough to cause problems until around the age of 50.

Other names for this condition are benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) and benign prostatic hypertrophy.

## **What is the cause?**

A man's prostate gland starts to get bigger at puberty, but it usually does not start to get big enough to cause problems until around the age of 50. Enlargement of the prostate can make the passageway through the urethra smaller. The bladder muscle forces urine through the narrowed urethra by squeezing more strongly. This can make the bladder muscle thicker and more sensitive. The change in the muscle can cause urination problems, such as a need to urinate more often. As the prostate grows even bigger, the urethra may be squeezed more tightly. This can cause a blockage (obstruction) and may make it hard for the bladder to empty completely.

## **What are the symptoms?**

Many men with enlarged prostates have just mild symptoms or no symptoms at all. If you have symptoms, they may include:

- A weak stream of urine
- Trouble starting or stopping the flow of urine
- Dribbling of urine, especially after urinating
- A feeling that your bladder is not empty
- Urinating more often, especially at night
- A strong and sudden urge to urinate
- Blood in the urine
- Inability to urinate, which is a medical emergency

BPH may cause urinary tract infections. If you have an infection, you may have burning or pain during urination.

## **How is it diagnosed?**

Your healthcare provider will ask about your medical history and symptoms and examine you. Tests may include:

- Urine tests
- Blood tests
- Rectal exam, which your provider does by gently putting a lubricated and gloved finger in your rectum. Your provider may also place his or her other hand on your belly to feel and check the size and shape of your organs.
- Rectal ultrasound, which uses a probe put into the rectum. The probe uses sound waves to show a picture of the prostate gland. A biopsy may be taken to help make a diagnosis. A biopsy is the removal of a small sample of tissue for testing.
- Tests to measure how fast urine flows when you urinate and the amount of urine left in the bladder after you urinate.
- Cystoscopy, which uses a small, flexible, lighted tube to look inside your urethra and bladder.

## **How is it treated?**

If you have BPH but no symptoms, or your symptoms are mild, you may not need any treatment. You should have regular exams to be sure that you are not developing more serious problems.

If your symptoms get bothersome or there is a risk that your kidneys will be affected, your provider may recommend treatment. BPH may be treated with medicines. If medicines do not work, several different procedures may be done to treat BPH. They may use energy, like radio waves or a laser, to remove or destroy excess prostate tissue, or they may make cuts in prostate tissue to reduce pressure on the urethra. In some cases, surgery may be done to remove the center of the prostate. Your healthcare provider will discuss the risks and benefits of the procedures available to you.

## **How can I take care of myself?**

Follow the full course of treatment prescribed by your healthcare provider. Ask your healthcare provider:

- How and when you will hear your test results
- How long it will take to recover
- What activities you should avoid and when you can return to your normal activities
- How to take care of yourself at home
- What symptoms or problems you should watch for and what to do if you have them

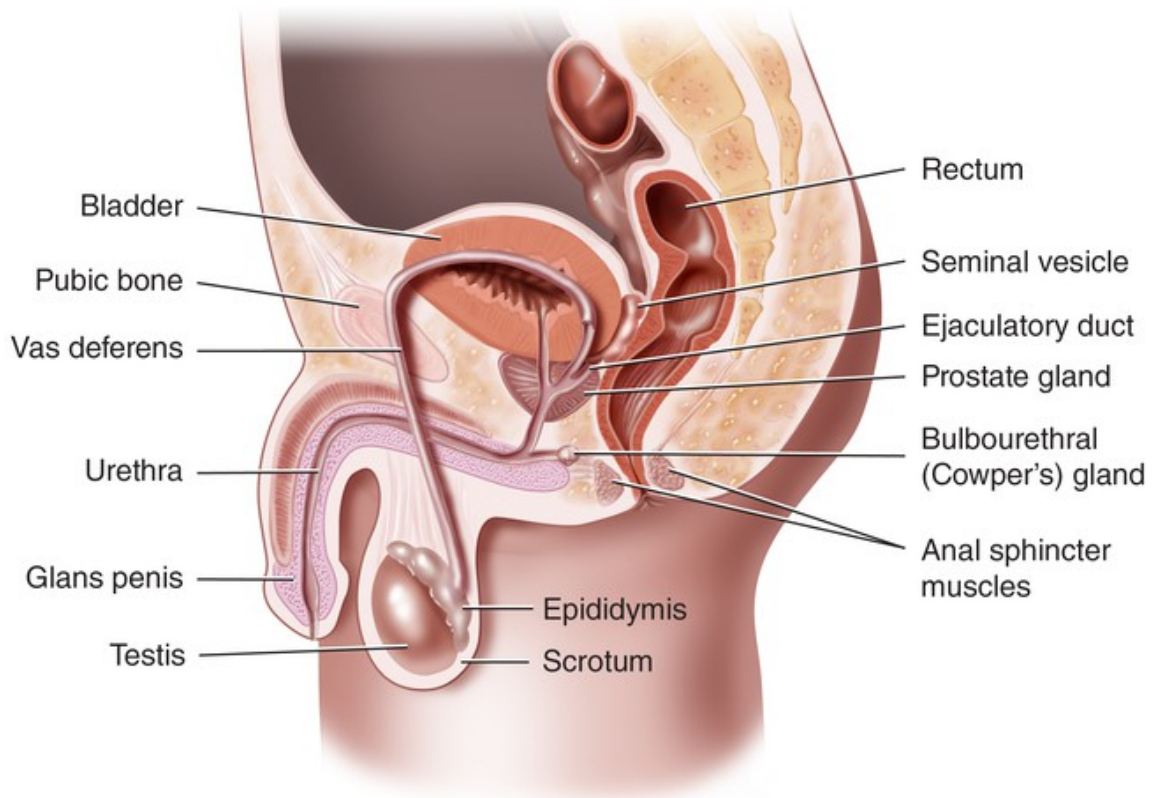
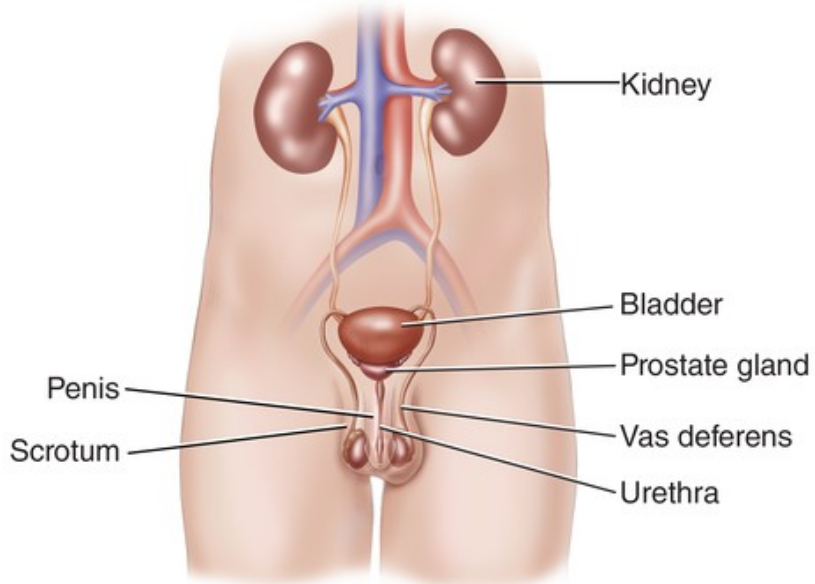
Make sure you know when you should come back for a checkup.

If you have symptoms of BPH, it's important to get checked by your healthcare provider because prostate cancer causes similar symptoms. BPH is not cancer and it does not seem to increase the chances of getting prostate cancer. You can, however, have both BPH and prostate cancer at the same time.

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# Male Pelvis



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