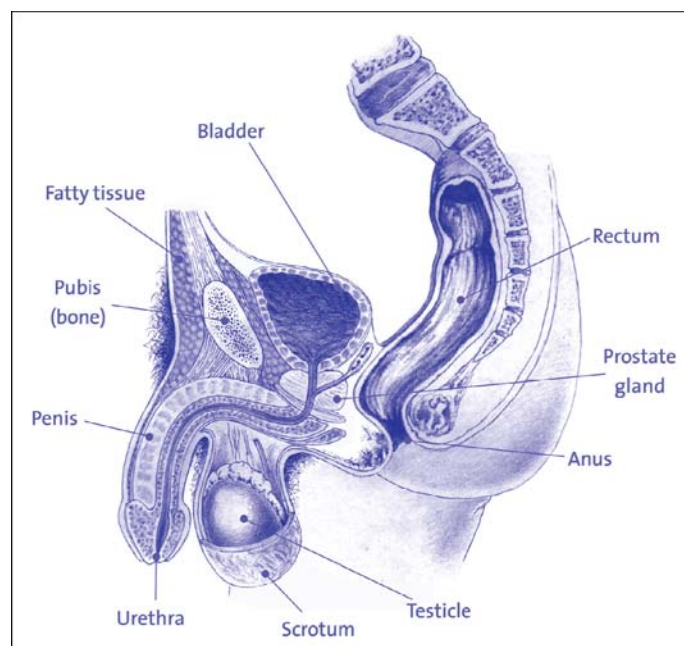


# Prostate Problems

This sheet provides general information about prostate problems which are common in men, especially those over the age of 50. In most cases there is nothing seriously wrong. However, it's always good to check things out with your doctor, especially if you are worried, find the symptoms troublesome or have pain.

## Why the prostate causes problems

The prostate sits under the bladder, between the base of the penis and the front of the back passage (the rectum).



The tube (urethra) which takes urine from the bladder to the penis passes through the prostate. When the prostate enlarges, it squeezes this tube causing various urinary difficulties.

You are unlikely to be aware of your prostate unless it causes you trouble. About half of all men over the age of 50 have prostate problems.

Some or all of the following changes may mean a prostate problem:

- Straining to begin urinating
- A delay in starting
- A dribbling or thin stream
- The feeling of having to go again, after having been
- Having to go often, especially at night
- A sudden urge to go
- Blood or pus in the urine.

In about 90% of cases, urinary problems are due to prostate enlargement which is part of normal ageing caused by hormones. This 'normal' enlargement of the prostate is not cancer and does not turn into cancer.

In many cases the symptoms are mild and there is no worry. However, it's always good to check things out with your doctor, especially if you are worried, find the symptoms really troublesome or have pain.

Your doctor may give you a rectal examination, ask questions about symptoms, take some tests and possibly refer you to a specialist for more tests. A combination of tests is best, as none of them in isolation gives a clear-cut answer.

In most cases, the symptoms are due to BPH (benign prostate hyperplasia). For this a small proportion of men need surgery, which removes part of the gland and relieves the pressure.

Some men get good relief from taking one of the several types of medication, which generally either change the hormone levels, or relax the prostate so it doesn't squeeze the urinary tube.

Sometimes symptoms are caused by prostatitis (inflammation of the prostate gland). Prostatitis can be caused by infection, which is treated with antibiotics. It can also be caused by physical injury to the prostate gland, or some autoimmune diseases (in which the body's immune system damages the body's own cells). Prostatitis is not prostate cancer.

In less than one man in ten who has urinary problems, the cause is prostate cancer. In many cases prostate cancer does not cause symptoms.

For further information about prostate cancer contact the Cancer Society on: 0800 CANCER (0800 226 237).