

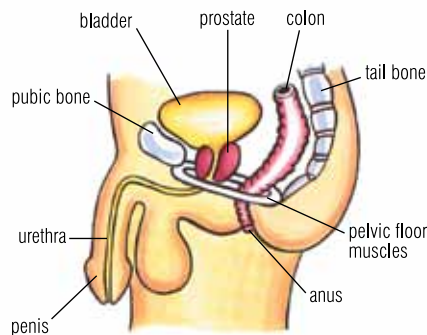


10 THE PROSTATE AND BLADDER PROBLEMS

The prostate is a gland that only men have. It is about the size of a walnut and sits below the neck of the bladder, surrounding the bladder outlet (the urethra). The prostate makes a milky fluid, which is part of semen and feeds the sperm.

As men age, the prostate gland gets bigger. This happens over many years and for some men this can cause bladder problems.

Poor bladder control can also happen due to other health issues. Men with poor bladder control can be upset and embarrassed by this problem. If you have changes in your bladder control, or concerns about your prostate gland, talk to your doctor or continence advisor.



WHAT ARE SOME COMMON PROSTATE PROBLEMS?

- 1 **Prostatitis is swelling** and soreness of the prostate gland and may be due to a bladder infection. It is more common in young men.
- 2 **Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (BPH) is when** the prostate gets gradually larger, usually starting in middle age. About one in four men will need surgery for this problem (BPH does not lead to cancer).
3. **Prostate Cancer is often found** before you have any warning signs. Your doctor may find it with a blood test (called a PSA) and a check of your prostate. It is the most common cancer in men, and you are more likely to get it as you age. However it is one of the most readily treated cancers.

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HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE A PROSTATE PROBLEM?

If you have one or more of these issues, you may have a prostate problem:

- trouble starting the flow of urine;
- slow urine stream once started;
- needing to pass urine more often through the day or night;
- leaking after passing urine, or between visits to the toilet;
- needing to pass urine again soon after going to the toilet;
- feeling an urgent need to pass urine;
- burning or pain when passing urine;
- blood in urine; and
- feeling that the bladder is not fully empty after going to the toilet.

Some of these problems may not be due to the prostate. For instance, some medicines may cause the bladder to store up urine. Your doctor or continence advisor can help you find the cause of your problem.

HOW CAN MY PROSTATE CAUSE BLADDER PROBLEMS?

Blocking of the urethra (the urine tube): As the prostate grows larger, it may block the bladder outlet and stop the bladder from emptying. In some cases, urine may get stored up until it starts to leak out. If this happens, see a doctor straight away.

An overactive bladder can be caused by the bladder working extra hard to get past a blockage. An overactive bladder can tighten without your control, causing an urgent need to pass urine. After surgery to ease the blockage you may still have an urgent need to pass urine, and it could get worse for a few weeks, until the bladder goes back to normal.

Surgery for prostate problems can damage the muscle and nerves of the bladder outlet in a few cases. This can cause poor bladder control. If it occurs it is almost always short-lived, though major surgery for prostate cancer can lead to long term bladder control problems.



HOW CAN POOR BLADDER CONTROL BE TREATED?

First, your doctor or continence advisor will want to look for the causes of your poor bladder control, such as prostate disease, infection, diabetes or some medicines.

There are a few ways that poor bladder control due to prostate disease can be treated.

1. **Check up with your doctor**

After a talk with your doctor, you may feel that you do not need any treatment. Poor bladder control can get better with time, or with simple changes to your daily habits (See the leaflet “Good Bladder Habits for Everyone”).

2. **Medicines**

There are a number of medicines that can help with bladder control. Ask your doctor about these.

3. **Prostate Surgery**

If your prostate is the problem, then surgery can remove all or part of the gland. The type of surgery will depend on the size of the prostate gland.

4. **Bladder Training**

A program of bladder training can help the bladder to hold more urine without leaks or urgent feelings, even for those with an overactive bladder (See the leaflet “Bladder Training”).

5. **Pelvic Floor Muscle Training**

Pelvic floor muscle training builds up the muscles that control how well the bladder and bowel work. Learn how to train your muscles before surgery and start as soon as you can after surgery (See the leaflet “Pelvic Floor Muscle Training for Men”).

6. **Continence Products**

There is a wide range of continence products to help cope with urine leaks (See the leaflet “Continence Products”).

Make sure you know enough about what the problem is, what treatments there are, how well they work, and what might go wrong, so that you can choose the treatment that is best for you, with your doctor’s help.

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SEEK HELP

Every bladder or bowel control problem—no matter how small —deserves attention.

If you have any questions about the prostate or bladder control, you can:

Call Expert Advisors on the National Continence Helpline for free:

- information;
- advice; and
- leaflets.

On FREECALL 1800 33 00 66 (8 am to 8 pm Monday to Friday), or

Visit the website: www.bladderbowel.gov.au

The Helpline can arrange for an interpreter through the Telephone Interpreter Service (TIS). Please ring 13 14 50 Monday to Friday and ask for the Helpline.

Prostate problems can cause poor bladder control.

* Calls from mobile telephones are charged at applicable rates.

