

# Bladder Problems and the Prostate





## What is the prostate?


The prostate is a gland found only in men. It is about the size of a man's big toe and is located below the neck of the bladder surrounding the bladder outlet or urethra (urine tube). Its job is to secrete a milky fluid which becomes part of the semen and nourishes the sperm.

As men get older the prostate gland gets bigger. This may take many years. For most men this does not create any problems. For a few men it can cause difficulty passing urine (water or wee).

Incontinence can also occur as a result of other sicknesses such as infections. It causes a lot of discomfort and embarrassment to the person affected. If you have any changes in your urine or concerns about your prostate gland contact a health worker, a doctor or a continence adviser. In most cases they can help.

### **Diabetes warning:**

If you are always feeling thirsty and having to urinate (pass water or wee) all the time, tell the doctor or the health worker. It is important that you are checked to make sure diabetes (sugar sickness) is not the problem.






## Prostate conditions


Common prostate conditions:

1. Prostatitis is an infection of the prostate gland and may have to do with a urinary tract infection. It is more common in younger men.
2. Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (BPH) causes the prostate to get bigger over a period of time usually starting in middle age. About 1 in 4 men will need surgery or medical treatment for this problem. BPH does not lead to cancer.
3. Prostate cancer may be found at first without any symptoms. It is a fairly common cancer and the chances of getting it increases with age, however, it usually responds to treatment.

## Bladder problems and the prostate


A man with a prostate problem may have any one or a number of these symptoms:


- difficulty starting the flow of urine;
  - slow urine stream once started;
  - the need to pass urine more often than usual during the day (frequency) or overnight;
  - dribbling either after passing urine or between visits to the toilet;
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- urinating again shortly after having already been;
  - feeling of urgency to urinate;
  - burning discomfort or even pain while passing urine;
  - the urine may be blood stained; and
  - feeling that the bladder is not completely empty.

## Prostate and incontinence

Incontinence may be associated with prostate conditions in several ways.

- The prostate blocking the urethra may stop the bladder emptying completely when urinating. Storing urine may become bad enough to cause 'overflow' incontinence, a situation which needs medical attention.
  - Irritable bladder muscle may be caused by the bladder trying to overcome a blockage. An irritable bladder can contract involuntarily resulting in 'urge' incontinence. After treating the blockage with surgery any underlying bladder irritability may, at first, result in some men noticing an increase in 'urge' incontinence until the bladder returns to normal.
  - Sometimes surgery for prostate problems can cause muscle and nerve damage to the sphincter muscle. This is the muscle that helps hold urine in the bladder.
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Incontinence may be the result. This incontinence can be short or long term depending on the degree or extent of the surgery.

## Finding help

If you are worried about your water works you should talk to a health worker, continence adviser or your doctor. You will be asked about your general health, medical problems and the medications you are taking because these may be causing some of the problems.

If you are worried about prostate cancer, talk to a health worker. There may be a men's clinic in your area otherwise you can ask to see a male health worker or doctor at the Medical Service if this will help you to feel more comfortable. You can also speak to a continence adviser if there is one available in your area. Make sure that the health worker, continence adviser or doctor explain things in a way that you understand and that you have your say when making decisions about the diagnosis, treatment options, outcomes, risks, complications and costs.

You can ask for time to talk with your family or a friend. You may also want to take someone with you when you talk to the health worker, continence adviser or doctor.





# Treatment

There are several things that might help incontinence when prostate disease is a possibility:

## 1. Medical tests and discussions

After medical tests and discussions with your doctor, family or other support people, you may feel that no treatment is needed. Symptoms sometimes improve on their own with time or with simple changes to daily activities and habits.

## 2. Medication

There are a number of prescription drugs available which work for some men.


## 3. Surgery

Whole or part of the affected prostate is removed. The size of the prostate gland may influence the type of surgery required.

Other options may include:

- **Bladder training**

Improve your bladder control by increasing the amount of urine your bladder can hold without urgency or leakage. Bladder training can also reduce urgency and how many times you need to go.






- **Pelvic floor exercises**

To strengthen the muscles that control how the bladder and the bowel work. It is advisable that you learn the exercises before any surgery and start doing them as soon as you are able.

- **Continence aids**

A wide range of continence aids are available to help cope with any urine loss. Contact your health worker, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Medical Service or a continence adviser. Look at the brochure in this series called 'Continence Products and Appliances'.

## Who can help?

- Your local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service.
  - Doctors.
  - A special continence adviser.
  - National Continence Helpline Freecall™ **1800 33 00 66**.
  - Visit the website at [www.bladderbowel.gov.au](http://www.bladderbowel.gov.au) or the National Public Toilet Map website at [www.toiletmap.gov.au](http://www.toiletmap.gov.au)
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## Other brochures in this series:

- Contenance Myths and Facts
- Bladder Training
- What is Urinary Incontinence
- Good Bladder Training for Everyone
- What is a Contenance Assessment
- Contenance Products and Appliances
- Pelvic Floor Exercises for Men
- Bladder Problems and the Prostate
- Pelvic Floor Exercises for Women
- Dementia and Urinary Incontinence
- A List of Ten Frequently Asked Questions
- Constipation
- Contenance Comic

### Remember

You are not alone. Incontinence can be prevented, better managed, treated and sometimes cured.



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