



The prostate is a walnut-sized gland located in front of the rectum and below the bladder. It wraps around the tube (the urethra) that carries urine from the bladder out through the penis. The prostate makes most of the fluid that makes up semen.

Prostate infection and prostate enlargement are two of the most common prostate problems.

### Prostate infection (prostatitis)

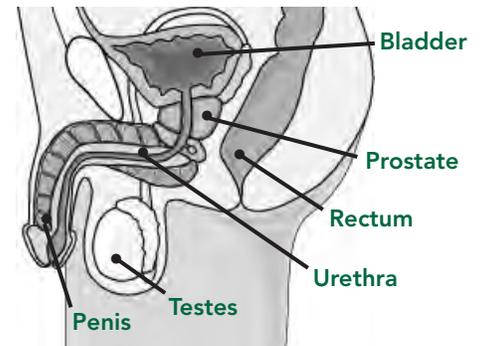
There are two types of prostate infection, acute and chronic. Acute infections come on suddenly and have some or all of these symptoms:

- fever and chills
- pain and burning during urination and ejaculation
- strong and frequent urge to urinate (pee) while passing only small amounts of urine
- lower back or abdominal pain
- blood in the urine (occasionally)

Symptoms of chronic prostatitis are usually milder, and you usually do not have a fever and chills. Either infection may happen when you have a urinary tract infection.

Sometimes, men have painful urinary symptoms without infection. This condition may be called prostatodynia. It is often related to stress or anxiety.

Prostate infections usually respond well to home care and antibiotic treatment. If the infection comes back, you may need long-term antibiotic treatment.



### Prevention

- Drink more fluids—as many as 8 to 12 glasses a day. You know you are drinking enough when you urinate more often than usual. These extra fluids help clean the urinary tract.
- Avoid alcohol and caffeine. Caffeine can cause a strong and frequent urge to urinate. Remember that colas, as well as coffee and tea, contain caffeine.
- Keep stress under control. High stress levels are closely related to prostatodynia.

### Home treatment

- Drink as much water as you can.
- Eliminate all alcohol and caffeine from your diet.
- Take hot baths to help soothe pain and reduce stress.
- Take aspirin or ibuprofen to ease painful symptoms.

### Call Kaiser Permanente if . . .

- You have a fever, chills, vomiting, or pain in your back or abdomen, along with your urinary symptoms.

- Symptoms continue for five days despite home care.
- Your symptoms suddenly get worse.
- It hurts when you urinate or ejaculate and you notice a discharge from the penis.
- Your urine is red or pink.

Always call your doctor or other health care professional if you have blood in your urine.

### Enlarged prostate (BHP-benign prostatic hypertrophy)

Most men have some symptoms of BHP. This seems to be a natural part of aging and is not really a disease. But it can be a nuisance. As the prostate gets bigger, it may squeeze or partly block the urethra. This often causes problems urinating, including:

- trouble getting urine started and stopped completely (dribbling)
- feeling like you need to urinate often. It may even wake you up at night.
- painful urination
- a weak urine stream
- feeling like your bladder isn't completely empty after you go

An enlarged prostate is not serious unless the symptoms bother you or you have other problems, such as backed-up urine, bladder infections,

or kidney damage. Some dribbling is very common and not necessarily a sign of prostate problems.

Surgery is usually not necessary for an enlarged prostate. The symptoms usually don't get worse over time, and may even clear up on their own. The best treatment may be no treatment at all. Your doctor can talk with you about treatment options, including medications that may relieve symptoms.

### Prevention

You can't prevent BHP. Some people believe that regular ejaculations help prevent prostate enlargement. There is no scientific proof of this, but it is risk-free.

### Home treatment

To reduce or control your symptoms:

- Avoid medications that can make it hard to urinate, such as over-the-counter antihistamines, decongestants, nasal sprays, and allergy pills.
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol. They make you urinate more often. And if you wake up at night to urinate, cut down on all beverages before bedtime.
- Urinate when you feel the need, and take plenty of time. Try sitting on the toilet instead of standing.
- If dribbling is a problem, wash your penis once a day to prevent infection.

### Call Kaiser Permanente if ...

- You develop fever, chills, or back or abdominal pain.
- You are taking diuretics, tranquilizers, antihistamines, decongestants, or antidepressants. They can make urinary problems worse and may be replaced by other drugs.
- Your symptoms last longer than two months.

### Considering an alternative?

Saw palmetto may relieve symptoms of BHP. It is a reasonably safe alternative. Talk with your doctor or other medical professional before using this or any other alternative treatment.

### Additional resources

- Connect to our Web site at **kp.org** to access health and drug encyclopedias, interactive programs, health classes, and more.
- Check your *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook*.
- Contact your local Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department for health information, programs, and other resources.

This information is not intended to diagnose or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor. If you have questions or need additional information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist.