

"P" for Prostate



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Or rather "pee" for prostate. In most men, the prostate is ignored or just about forgotten until they have trouble with urination or it's time for a prostate exam (digital rectal exam) at the end of a yearly physical. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 80% of men will eventually need treatment for prostate problems. How much do you know about this time-bomb ticking away deep in the plumbing of every male?

The Prostate

Shaped like a chestnut, a healthy prostate gland weighs around 20 g and is located between the bladder and the penis. The posterior part of the prostate ends at the rectum, hence the digital rectal examination to verify the shape and size of the prostate. The prostate secretes a thin, milky, acidic fluid that make up 30 to 40% of semen volume. The prostate also secretes nutrients such as zinc, amino acids, citric acid, vitamins and fructose that keep sperm healthy.

Prostate problems

Although infertility problems can be due to poor prostate function, the three main prostate conditions are: enlargement, infection and cancer.

Enlargement (Benign prostate hyperplasia/hypertrophy)

At around the age of 50, the beginning of a benign enlargement of the prostate gland occurs as a secondary effect of male hormones. This condition is called benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH). When significant enlargement occurs, the prostate may pinch off the urethra making urination difficult or impossible.

Infection (Prostatitis)

A prostatitis is an infection of the prostate gland. The infection can be acute or chronic, bacterial or abacterial (fungal, viral). Prostatitis symptoms may vary from low back pain to intense burning or urination.

Prostate Cancer

Prostate cancer is the most common type of cancer diagnosed in American men. In 2003, it was estimated that 220,900 new cases of prostate cancer were diagnosed in the United States alone. Prostate cancer can be malignant (spread to surrounding areas) and metastatic (spread to nearby lymph nodes, bones or other organs). Prostate cancer treatment has improved significantly due to early detection. Early prostate cancer symptoms aren't usually noticeable, however be mindful of changes in urination (increased frequency, dribbling, hesitancy).

Prostate Treatment

There are a number of herbs and supplements to aid conditions of the prostate.

Saw Palmetto

Saw palmetto is the leading natural treatment for BPH. Saw palmetto inhibits 5-alpha-reductase, the enzyme that converts testosterone to its more active form, dihydrotestosterone (DHT) which is responsible for the enlargement of the prostate.

Zinc

Zinc plays a large role in prostate function. Studies have shown that zinc supplementation helps shrink the prostate in patients with BPH. When supplementing zinc, always remember to supplement with copper as large doses of zinc may deplete copper levels from the body.

Pygeum Africanum

Studies have shown that Pygeum bark is safe and effective for men with BPH of mild or moderate severity.