

PROSTATITIS/ENLARGED PROSTATE

By : The Romano Foundation

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“ Suddenly my ejaculation became so painful”

The prostate is a doughnut-shaped male sex gland, positioned beneath the urinary bladder. It encircles the urinary outlet, or urethra. Contraction of the muscles in the prostate squeezes fluid from the prostate into the urethral tract during ejaculation. Prostatic fluid makes up the bulk of semen.

The prostate is the most common site of disorders in the male genitourinary system. Generally speaking, there are three conditions that can cause problems with the prostate: prostatitis, which is inflammation of the prostate; benign prostatic hypertrophy (BPH), which is an enlarged prostate with no signs of cancer; and prostate cancer.

Prostatitis, common in men of all ages, is the inflammation of the prostate gland. The usual cause is infectious bacteria that invade the prostate from another area of the body.

Hormonal changes associated with aging may also be a cause. The inflammation can result in urine retention. This causes the bladder to become distended, weak, tender, and itself susceptible to infection. Infection in the bladder is in turn easily transmitted up the ureters to the kidneys.

There are three types of prostatitis: acute infectious prostatitis, chronic infectious prostatitis, and non-infectious prostatitis. Acute infectious prostatitis is usually caused by bacteria. The onset is sudden. Symptoms may include pain between the scrotum and rectum, fever, frequent urination accompanied by a burning sensation, a feeling of fullness in the bladder, and blood or pus in the urine. Chronic (long-term) prostatitis is also a bacterial infection. Symptoms may include nothing more than a recurring bladder infection.

Non-infectious prostatitis is, as the name suggests, not caused by a bacterial infection. The cause for this inflammation is not known. Symptoms can include frequent urination possibly accompanied by pain; pain after ejaculation; and lower abdominal pain. All types of prostatitis, if untreated, can lead to impotence and difficulty with urination.

Benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) is the gradual enlargement of the prostate, which usually starts to occur after age forty. Fifty percent of men over sixty years of age and ninety percent of men over seventy have it. After the age of fifty or so, a man's testosterone and free testosterone level decrease, while the levels of other hormones, such as prolactin and estradiol (a type of estrogen), increase. This creates an increase in the amount of dihydrotestosterone---a very potent form of testosterone---within the prostate. This causes a hyperplasia (overproduction) of prostate cells, which ultimately results in prostate enlargement.

While not cancerous, an enlarged prostate can nevertheless cause problems. If it becomes too large, it obstructs the urethral canal, interfering with urination and the ability to empty the bladder completely. Because the bladder cannot empty completely, the kidneys also may not empty as they should. Dangerous pressure on the kidneys can result. In severe cases, the kidneys may be damaged both by pressure and by substances in the urine. Bladder infections are associated with both prostatitis and enlarged prostate.

The major symptom of enlargement of the prostate is the need to pass urine frequently, with frequency increasing as time passes. A man may find himself rising several times during the night to urinate. There can also be pain, burning, and difficulty in starting and stopping urination. The presence of blood in the urine is not uncommon.

A high in zinc diet, prevention of bladder infections, a habit of drinking enough liquids, regular exercise routine in life, low tobacco and alcohol use and a proper diet to keep cholesterol low during life are important to prevent prostate problems.

