



## Urinary problems, male

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Problems with urination — difficulty getting urine started or completely stopped, frequent or painful urination, decreased force of the urine stream, incomplete bladder emptying, or blood in the urine — can have a variety of causes, ranging from a urinary tract infection to prostate cancer.

Getting the treatment you need requires medical diagnosis. The following tips may help provide relief in some instances, however, and help you develop questions for your doctor.

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### Urinary tract infections (UTIs)

Urinary tract infections (also known as [UTIs](#), *cystitis* and *bladder infections*) are most common among women, but they can also affect men, children and infants. In men, most UTIs are caused by obstructions or structural problems in the urinary tract. In men over age 50, the problem is often caused by an enlarged prostate gland that hinders the flow of urine out of the bladder. Urine trapped within the bladder becomes the perfect breeding ground for bacteria.

Symptoms may include a frequent, urgent need to urinate; pain or a burning sensation during urination; cloudy or foul-smelling urine; blood in the urine; pain or itching in the *urethra* (tube that carries urine from the bladder out through the penis); pressure in the lower abdomen; and lower back pain.

#### What you can do (UTIs)

- Drink plenty of clear fluids to help wash bacteria away; water is especially good for this purpose.
- Empty the bladder frequently and completely.
- Add cranberry juice to your diet. It not only provides needed fluid; studies reveal that substances in cranberry juice may prevent bacteria from invading the lining of the bladder. If you don't care for the strong taste of cranberries, you can get the same benefit by diluting it with water. *Note: Be sure to select cranberry juice, not cranberry "drink" or "cocktail." These fluids contain high levels of sugar. Sugar-free versions are acceptable.*

- If your doctor prescribes antibiotics, be sure to take the entire prescription as directed to help prevent a relapse or recurrence. Do not discontinue the use of any prescription medications without first checking with your doctor.

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## Prostate Problems

The *prostate*, which produces some of the fluid in semen, is a donut-shaped gland that sits below the bladder and surrounds the *urethra*. The three most common prostate problems are prostate infection (prostatitis), prostate enlargement ([benign prostatic hyperplasia](#)) and prostate cancer.

### Prostate infection

*Prostatitis* is an infection of the prostate gland that may result from a urinary tract infection from bacteria traveling up the urethra. The infection usually causes swelling, constriction of the urethra and urinary problems.

Symptoms include difficulty starting or stopping urination; a strong and frequent urge to urinate while passing only small amounts of urine; pain or discomfort in the area behind the *scrotum* (the “sac” of skin that encloses the testes); low-back or abdominal pain; and burning pain during urination or ejaculation. Fever and chills, a general feeling of illness (malaise) and blood in the urine or pus-filled discharge are also possible.

The prostate can also become inflamed without bacterial infection, causing chronic pelvic pain syndrome. Symptoms are similar to bacterial prostatitis; the cause is unknown.

### What you can do (prostate infection)

Prostate infection requires a doctor’s diagnosis and antibiotics, although self-care may be helpful as well. Chronic pelvic pain syndrome may respond to self-care alone.

- Drink lots of clear fluids — both water and decaffeinated drinks.
- Avoid alcohol, caffeine and spicy foods.
- Try warm baths or over-the-counter (OTC) pain relievers: aspirin, acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) to soothe the pain. **NEVER give aspirin to children/teenagers unless your healthcare provider advises you to do so. It can cause Reye’s syndrome, a rare but often fatal condition.**
- Practice [stress-management techniques](#) if you experience anxiety or stress with prostate symptoms.

### Prostate enlargement

Prostate enlargement (also known as *benign prostatic hyperplasia* or *BPH*) is a noncancerous increase in the size of the prostate gland. The condition appears to be part of the normal aging process for men. Four out of five men between 50 and 60 years of age have this condition. It is not usually a serious problem, but it can become severe enough to compress the urethra and hinder urine flow.

The hallmark symptom of BPH is *nocturia*, which is the need to get up at night to urinate. Other common symptoms include difficulty starting, stopping or maintaining the flow of urine; a decrease in the force or volume of urine flow; or increased frequency of urination. Symptoms that develop as a result of the condition include fatigue (usually due to difficulty getting back to sleep because of nocturia); and mild dehydration (if fluid intake is decreased to avoid having to get up at night).

### **What you can do (Prostate enlargement)**

- Avoid the use of caffeine, *diuretics* ("water pills" that increase fluid loss), alcohol and any over-the-counter (OTC) medications such as decongestants that have warnings related to urine retention side effects.
- Take plenty of time to urinate. Sit on the toilet instead of standing.
- If you find urination difficult, put your hand in a bowl or stream of warm water or gently rub the inside of your thigh while you attempt to urinate.
- Do not limit fluid intake. Try to drink two quarts of water and other fluids throughout the day to help prevent urinary tract infections.
- Don't drink fluids after the evening meal. Empty your bladder before bedtime.
- If you have nocturia, leave a night light on and make sure the path to the bathroom is clear to decrease the risk of falls. You might prefer to keep a urinal at the bedside to avoid getting up at all — especially if you tend to feel dizzy or light-headed when you first get out of bed.

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## **Prostate cancer**

Prostate cancer often grows slowly, remains within the prostate gland, and causes no health problems. In some men, however, it spreads aggressively and can become life-threatening. (Prostate cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in men in the United States.)

Symptoms include decreased strength of the urine stream, difficulty getting urine started or completely stopped, frequent and painful urination, hip or lower-back pain, and blood or pus in the urine.

### **What you can do (prostate cancer)**

While prostate surgery is successful in many cases for localized prostate cancer, it can also result in impotence and urinary incontinence. As a result, men diagnosed with the disease may face a difficult dilemma: whether to undergo treatment and take the risk of side effects, or opt for the "watchful waiting" approach and risk the possibility that the cancer will spread.

Watching and waiting — a process in which your doctor closely monitors your condition without treating it — may be appropriate in some situations (for example, if your tumor is small and appears to be growing slowly). However, if you and your physician decide this is the best course of action, it's important that you stick to a regular schedule of follow-up exams. Your doctor will help you decide how frequent your checkups should be.

Over time, if your doctor notices a steady increase in your prostate-specific antigen (PSA) level (a sign that the cancer could be spreading), it may be time to discuss a different treatment path.

Important questions to ask your doctor:

- What are my treatment options?
- What are the risks, benefits and possible side effects of each option?
- How will treatment affect my sex life?
- Will the treatment be painful, and if so, how will you treat the pain?
- Will I need to change my normal activities? If so, how and for how long?
- How often will I need checkups?

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## **Final note**

Any number of physical problems can lead to difficulty urinating. None of them should be ignored. If you experience urination problems, contact your healthcare provider.

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