

Prostate Health

The prostate is a walnut-sized organ that lies just below the bladder, surrounding the urethra. The function of the prostate is to enhance the motility of sperm cells by secreting a thin, alkaline fluid into the urethra. Inflammation of the prostate (prostatitis) and benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) are common afflictions of men over the age of 50.(1 &#n106590>) Prostate cancer is the leading form of cancer among men.

Prostatitis is inflammation caused by an infection of the prostate. Acute bacterial prostatitis is a sudden condition caused by bacterial invasion. Abscesses may form, and the potential for infection is high. Chronic bacterial prostatitis can result from enlargement of the prostate and the trapping of bacteria in the urethra. Chronic prostatitis is a major source of urinary tract infections among men.

Benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH)

Hyperplasia describes the overgrowth of tissue. Benign prostatic hyperplasia is the non-cancerous overproduction of prostate cells that result in enlargement of the prostate. This condition, which commonly afflicts men over the age of 50, can lead to a range of uncomfortable symptoms and increases the propensity toward bladder infections. The exact mechanism that stimulates prostatic hyperplasia is not completely understood although hormonal changes are thought to play a significant role as well as body fat.(2 &#fn106593>)

Prostate cancer

Prostate cancer is the most common form of cancer in men. It is primarily diagnosed in men over 65, although it may begin much earlier. It is a very slow growing form of cancer. Prostate cancer often metastasizes to other tissue, including the brain, lungs, lymph nodes, and bones. Early detection is critical in order to increase the chances for survival. Examinations are recommended routinely for all men over the age of 40.

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^{^1} Smeltzer SC, Bare BG. Medical Surgical Nursing. 7th Ed.Philadelphia: JB Lippincott Co. 1992.

^{^2} de Lignieres B. Transdermal dihydrotestosterone treatment of 'andropause'. Ann Med. 1993;25(3):235-41.

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