

Prostate Health

Information on BPH (Benign Prostatic Hypertrophy)



How to Use Herbal Remedies Safely

This guidebook is not intended to replace medical advice. You should consult a Healthcare Professional if you have any condition which is of concern. For best results when taking herbal remedies, follow the guidelines below.

If the product you have has an in-pack leaflet then you should follow the instructions and advice on the leaflet and product packaging.

If the product does not come with an in-pack leaflet then you should follow the instructions and advice on the product packaging. The following general advice also applies to products with no in-pack leaflet.

- If there is any doubt as to the nature of the problem please consult your Doctor for a diagnosis.
- Do not use when pregnant or breastfeeding unless under the supervision of a Healthcare Professional.
- Do not use for children under 2 years of age unless under the supervision of a Healthcare Professional.
- Do not exceed stated doses.
- Do not use alongside medication with the same action eg. a tranquillizing herb alongside tranquillizing medication.
- Do not take more than 3 herbal remedies concurrently.
- Stop taking herbal remedies 14 days before surgery.



Prostate Problems

Benign Prostatic Hypertrophy is a complicated way of describing non-cancerous enlargement of the prostate gland. 50% of men will be experiencing some degree of prostate enlargement by the time they're 50, and almost 100% of men that reach the age of 80 will find their prostate troublesome.

(Madersbacher S, Studer U.E. Benigne Prostatohyperplasie. Schweiz Med Forum. Nov 2002; 45: 1068-73)

These figures aren't to do with prostate cancer, but the benign enlargement of the prostate gland. Whilst being less serious than cancer, this nevertheless manages to reduce your quality of life quite considerably.

What does an enlarged prostate feel like?

Signs of an enlarged prostate are:

- A feeble urinary stream
- Difficulty getting started when needing to urinate
- Stopping and starting rather than a steady stream
- Having to urinate frequently and urgently
- Having to get up frequently in the night to urinate
- Feeling that you can't empty your bladder completely
- Loss of libido
- Recurrent urinary tract infections

Sound familiar? Many men assume that these are just inevitable signs of ageing, but actually they're the result of the enlargement of the prostate gland. Extracts of the herb Saw palmetto have been traditionally used by men to relieve the urinary symptoms of an enlarged prostate and reduce the discomfort.

It is important, however, to check with your GP that it is in fact an enlarged prostate that is causing the symptoms and not something else, such as infection, which would require different treatment.

What's happening?

The prostate gland is about the size of a chestnut, and consists of layers of muscle and glandular tissue. It lies at the base of the bladder, surrounding the entrance of the bladder into the urethra – the urethra is the tube that carries urine from the bladder down through the penis and out of the body. See Figure 1.

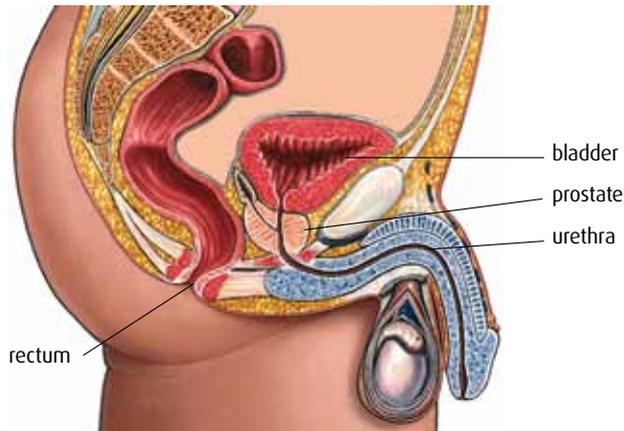


Figure 1

© 2004 Nucleus Medical Art

The cells of the prostate gland secrete a clear fluid, which protects sperm from the acid environment of the urethra and vagina, as well as increasing the sperm's ability to wriggle about (sperm motility).

Once men get past the age of 30, hormonal changes start to encourage the prostate gland to grow, and as it grows it squashes the urethra as it passes through the prostate gland. This makes it increasingly difficult for urine to leave the bladder effectively.

As the prostate grows, urine flow slows

Getting down to the science, the reason that the gland starts to enlarge is that as men age increasing amounts of testosterone start being metabolised into an inflammatory type of testosterone, called dihydrotestosterone (DHT). DHT starts accumulating in the prostate and attaching to cells there, making the tiny glands in the prostate swell up. The overall effect is a bigger prostate gland, less room for urine to pass through, and a collection of the unpleasant symptoms described above.

Due to the difficulties of emptying urine completely through the pinched urethra, urine can stagnate in the bladder where it is a fertile breeding ground for bacteria – hence, frequent urinary tract infections may be experienced.

Passing blood in your urine is always an unhealthy sign. It needs to be checked by your doctor, so don't hesitate to seek medical attention. Prostate enlargement needs to be diagnosed by a doctor so always check with your GP if you notice any symptoms connected to your urinary system.

Research has now shown that Saw Palmetto extract provides mild to moderate improvement in urinary symptoms for men with an enlarged prostate gland. Saw Palmetto extracts have been shown to reduce inflammatory activity within the prostate.⁽¹⁾ This effect is achieved without influencing the secretion of PSA (prostate specific antigen), suggesting that it won't interfere with the use of this marker substance.

Saw Palmetto

This herb has been used by Native Americans for thousands of years. They used the fresh fruit and crushed seeds to treat enlarged prostates and male cystitis.

The oily part of Saw Palmetto berries appears to have a balancing effect on the hormones within the prostate, without causing problems such as loss of libido or the growth of 'man breasts'.⁽²⁾ The overall effect is generally positive for symptoms of an enlarged prostate such as restricted urine flow and getting up many times in the night. Saw Palmetto can be taken long term to maintain improvements.

(1) Dr J. Tan MB,BS A guide to the use of Saw Palmetto in BPH for healthcare professionals. 2008; P15.

(2) Dr J. Tan MB,BS A guide to the use of Saw Palmetto in BPH for healthcare professionals. 2008; P16.



Saw palmetto extracts are not contraindicated with other general medication, and can be taken alongside other hormonal medication (e.g. other prostate medication) with the doctor's agreement.

Other steps to take for a healthy prostate

- Take a zinc supplement
- Take Essential Fatty Acids (EFAs) such as fish oils, which have an anti-inflammatory effect
- Pumpkin seeds contain both zinc and EFAs and are therefore a good snack food to munch on
- Reduce alcohol and caffeine intake, especially in the evenings
- Exercise – nothing dramatic is necessary, just a regular moderate exercise such as walking for 20 minutes
- Keep water intake up, but not in the 2 hours before bed
- Sexual abstinence and withdrawing without orgasm can contribute to BPH, so avoid them

Go to the doctor if you notice any of these symptoms

- Changes in your urinary stream
- Bladder discomfort
- Bladder irritation
- Blood in the urine
- Increased frequency of urination
- Signs of inflammation or swelling around the testicles
- Testicular discomfort
- Fever or chills associated with urinary discomfort

These symptoms could be connected to BPH or a bacterial infection called prostatitis, both of which are easily treated. They need, however, to be diagnosed by a doctor. Always check with your GP if you notice any of these symptoms.

Joe's Story



Prostate problems? That's something that happens to really old men, isn't it? At least that's what I thought until it sort of sneaked up on me. I was only in my early 50s when I found that I was getting up several times during the night to go to the loo, and having to check for public loos when driving. I realised that things were not as they should be. Benign Prostatic Hypertrophy, the doctor called it. "It happens as you get older, don't worry." Don't worry!! The choices offered to me at that point were drugs or surgery. Choices...

So the search began for a third way. I believe that there is a cure for everything nature; all we have to do is look. It is well documented that the oil from Saw Palmetto berries has a beneficial effect on the prostate, so I immediately began a course of one-a-day capsules of Saw Palmetto oil.

The result – here I am, my symptoms are nearly all gone, and I can't remember the last time I had to get up in the night. One little capsule a day is an easy way to such peace of mind. It's good to have back the quality of life that I previously took for granted!

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