

Introduction

You have been told that you have benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH). BPH is the normal, non-cancerous growth of the middle lobes of the prostate. It often starts when a man is about 45 to 50 years old. The prostate is a muscular, glandular organ that weighs about one ounce. It is the size and shape of a walnut and normally feels firm upon digital rectal examination (DRE). It produces fluid for semen, which carries sperm. Although the growth of the middle lobes of your prostate is normal, you may notice some symptoms when you pass urine. As men age, they are more likely to develop BPH. By age 80 years, about 80% of men have enlarged prostates, but only 40% to 50% of men actually develop any symptoms.

Symptoms You Might Notice

- Decreased force of the urine stream and/or urinary hesitancy.
- Feeling the need to pass urine more often, both during the day and at night.
- A feeling there is still urine in the bladder after passing urine.
- Feeling pressure in the lower belly above the pubic bone that is only partially decreased after voiding.
- A gradual or sudden inability to urinate, even with strong urge.
- Post-void dribbling.

Signs Your Health Care Provider May Find on Examination

- Possible bladder swelling in the lower belly above the pubic bone.
- A large amount of urine left in the bladder after passing urine normally or low flow rate on a flow study.
- New or recurrent urinary tract infection(s).

- Enlargement of prostate on DRE. Your health care provider will feel your prostate by inserting their gloved index finger into your rectum and gently pressing on the prostate.
- Possible mild rise of prostatic-specific antigen level (PSA) in the blood.

Treatment

BPH does not progress in all patients. In men with mild BPH, 57% progress to worse BPH in 9 years; however, only 10% require surgical intervention.

- Watchful waiting – Re-evaluation of symptoms, DRE, and PSA in a year. Preferred in patients without bothersome symptoms.
- Medications – Several medications are available to shrink the prostate and relax the muscle, making it easier to empty the bladder.
- Surgery – Several procedures reduce the size of the middle lobes of the prostate, allowing the bladder to empty better. Newer outpatient procedures are now available with fewer side effects and to preserve sexual function.

Prevention

There is no way to prevent an enlarged prostate. It is important to follow your health care provider's advice, including:

- Call the office if symptoms increase before the next appointment.
- Take your medication as prescribed.
- If you have not urinated in the last 4 to 6 hours, call the office or go to the Emergency Department.

References

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