

Prostate problems...

The prostate gland is found in men only. Its job is to produce seminal fluid to nourish the sperm, which is made in the testis. Prostate problems can occur at any age but are far more common from the age of 50.

The normal adult prostate is about the size of a walnut. It is found below the bladder, in front of the rectum and behind the symphysis pubis (see diagram). As men grow older, the gland often enlarges and

- Dribbling after urination.
- Pain on passing urine.
- Blood in the urine.
- Pain or discomfort in the region between the testes and the anus.

If you have one or more of these symptoms, you should see your GP.

What will my GP do?

Your GP will want to ask you a few more questions about the problems you have been having.

common cause).

- A bladder problem.
- A narrowing of the tube through which the urine flows.
- Cancer of the prostate gland (least common cause).

Will I need an operation?

In many cases with only mild symptoms, reassurance and regular follow up are all that is necessary. Occasionally, your GP will prescribe medication to

How common is cancer of the prostate gland?

The lifetime risk for men from birth to 74 years is one in 16.

Prostate cancer is the most common form of cancer for men. However, it has a much better outlook than lung cancer, which is the most common cause of cancer death in men. This is because prostate cancer develops slowly and responds well to treatment, particularly when diagnosed early.

Does having a relative with prostate cancer increase the chances?

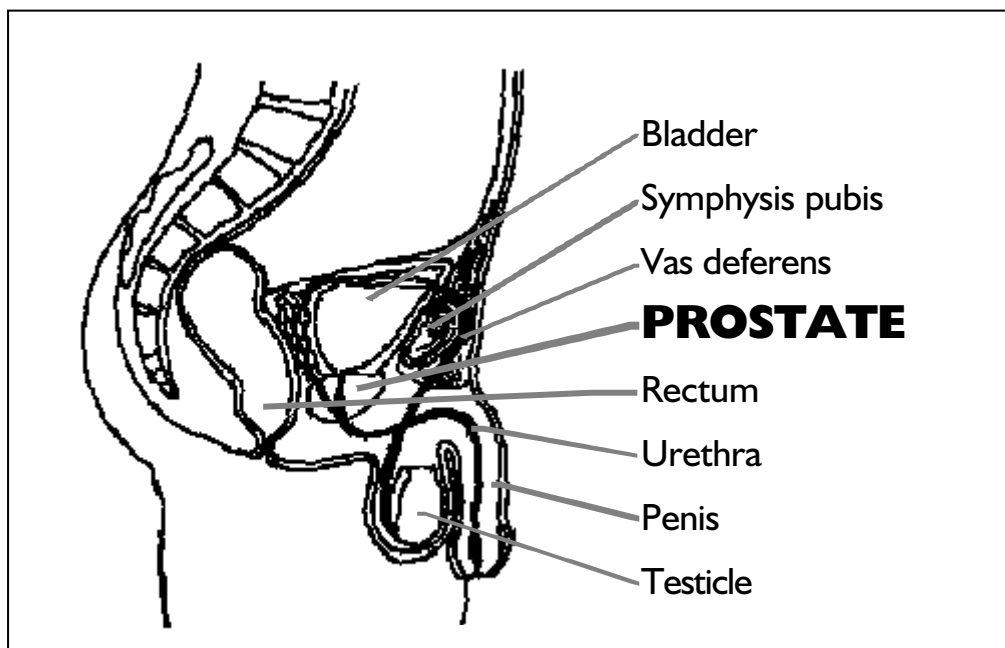
Yes. If a primary relative (a brother or father) had cancer of the prostate, the risk is four times greater. If a secondary relative (uncle or grandfather) had cancer of the prostate, the risk is two times greater.

Men with a family history of prostate cancer should visit their GP for an annual checkup from the age of 40.

Should all men have an annual prostate check up?

Annual prostate checkups are not routinely recommended for all men.

However, you may wish to discuss this with your GP on your next visit. If you have any of the symptoms mentioned above, or a family history of prostate cancer, you should definitely seek the advice of your GP.



problems may arise.

How do I know if I have a prostate problem?

Early symptoms may include:

- Passing urine more often.
- Poor urinary stream (not what it used to be!).
- Getting up a lot at night to pass urine.
- A feeling of not emptying the bladder properly.

Then he or she is likely to examine your prostate by placing a gloved finger into the rectum to feel its size and shape. This procedure may be uncomfortable but it is not painful.

A urine test, blood test and sometimes referral for x-rays may follow the examination.

What are the possible causes of prostate problems?

- Non-cancerous enlargement of the gland (most

relieve symptoms.

In more advanced cases, a referral to a surgeon who specialises in urinary tract problems (a urologist) is needed. Often the urologist will recommend an operation called a TUR (trans urethral resection). This is aimed at relieving the symptoms. At the same time, the surgeon will collect a specimen of the gland to check for cancer. Usually, the result will be negative for cancer.