

enCATHopedia Volume 6

ENLARGED
PROSTATE
AND THE
BLADDER

Enlarged prostate (benign prostatic hyperplasia, BPH)

The prostate is a male gland, located just below the bladder. As men age, the prostate can become enlarged. The reasons for this are unknown, but risk factors include functioning testes and age. By the age of 50, prostate enlargement affects 50% of all men, and by the age of 80, this figure reaches about 90%. It is not cancer, nor is it thought to raise the risk for cancer.

The urethra, through which all urine passes for voiding, goes straight through the prostate. When the prostate grows, it squeezes the urethra, which can make urination difficult or even impossible.

How an enlarged prostate affects the bladder

An enlarged prostate can press around the urethra, interrupting to a smaller or larger extent the flow of urine through the urethra.

That means the bladder, which is essentially muscle, must push harder to expel urine. As a result, it thickens like any other muscle does when it has to work hard.

The thicker bladder loses some of its capacity and contractibility, reducing its ability to expel urine. The result may be frequent urination, a weak stream, sudden urges to urinate, or the need to strain when voiding. If the bladder can't void completely, the build-up of residual urine can lead to retention and its complications, including leakage, urinary tract infections, or backflow of urine into the kidneys, damaging them.

Recognizing the symptoms of enlarged prostate

The symptoms of enlarged prostate blocking the urethra include one or more of the following:

- Difficulty in starting to empty
- Weak urine flow
- Feeling that the bladder has not been completely emptied
- Trouble resisting the urge to urinate
- Feeling the need to urinate often and at night
- Severe urgings that lead to urine leakage

Sometimes these emptying problems can lead to a complete stop of urine flow and urinary tract infections that are difficult to treat. The symptoms may also be due to other illnesses in the lower urinary system. A doctor should always be consulted if one or more of these symptoms persist.

Relieving symptoms with Clean Intermittent Catheterization (CIC)

There are many treatments available for the reduction in size of the enlarged prostate. However, at any stage, a caregiver may recommend symptom relief with periodic or ongoing use of a disposable catheter.

This is a good option as it empties the bladder completely. Complete emptying relieves that feeling of having to go but not being able to, and eliminates the risk for embarrassing leaks. It is also extremely important to urinary system health, and helps prevent the risk for urinary tract infections.

Most men find self-catheterization easy to learn, and though it may feel a little strange the first few times, it does not hurt. Best of all, it offers immediate and ongoing relief of all the symptoms of enlarged prostate, enabling a return to a sense of normalcy.



Living with self-catheterization

Bladder problems can make it hard to go about our normal day-to-day lives with confidence. CIC can help in a lot of different ways.

With a hydrophilic, safe, single-use catheter, self-catheterization is quick, comfortable and discreet. Some people with bladder problems worry about going out in case there are leaks that get smelly. Self-catheterizing can be part of the solution.

Self-catheterization gives better control of when, where and how to empty the bladder. And self-catheterizing before going to bed helps empty the bladder completely, meaning fewer trips to the bathroom and a better night's sleep.

enCATHopedia is an information series addressing a range of subjects within urology. It is part of our commitment to improve quality of life for users and healthcare professionals worldwide.

Read more on bladder problems and solutions or listen to others sharing their stories at:

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At Wellspect we value the people behind our success as a leading provider of life-changing products for bowel and bladder management such as the well-known brands LoFric® and Navina™. From the thousands of users and healthcare professionals worldwide who inspire our innovative solutions, we know that working together is the best way to advance continence care, giving our users more time for life. Building on over 30 years of life-improving performance, we passionately strive to make a difference every day to everyone who needs our products and services.

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