

Prostate Condition

Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (BPH)

What is benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH)?

As a man ages, his prostate gland commonly becomes enlarged. This condition is known as benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH).

Who is likely to have BPH?

While it rarely affects men under age 40, BPH affects more than half of men in their 60s and 90 percent in their 70s and 80s. BPH is the cause of more than 4.5 million visits to physicians.

What characterizes BPH?

Men with BPH have the need to urinate more frequently than normal, especially at night. This condition develops as the prostate enlarges and presses against the urethra, causing it to narrow. As a result, the bladder contracts even when it contains small amounts of residual urine, causing more frequent urination. Over time, the bladder may weaken and lose the ability to empty itself, causing symptoms such as a weak or interrupted urine stream, urine leaking from the penis, and the urgent need to urinate. Sometimes, men may find themselves unable to urinate at all. This condition—called acute urinary retention—can be triggered by an over-the-counter decongestant drug known as sympathomimetic, by alcohol, by cold temperatures, or by a long period of immobility.

Definitions

Benign:

Not cancerous.

Prostate:

Part of the male reproductive system, the prostate gland produces a fluid that helps make up semen. This fluid activates the sperm during sexual climax.

Hyperplasia:

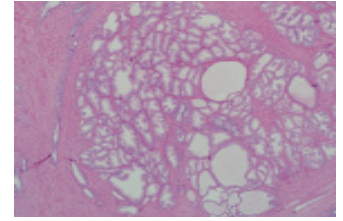
Abnormal increase in size, or hypertrophy.

Urethra:

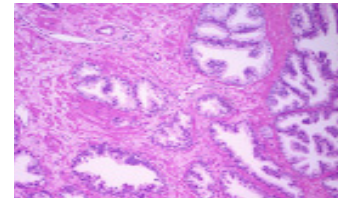
Urine travels through this tube from the bladder, through the prostate, and out through the penis.

Pathologist:

A physician who examines tissues and fluids to diagnose disease in order to assist in making treatment decisions.



Benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH).



Normal prostatic cells.

While no connection between BPH and prostate cancer exists, their symptoms are similar. Therefore, men experiencing these symptoms should see a physician right away. Also, over time, severe BPH can cause serious problems including urinary tract infections, bladder or kidney damage, bladder stones, and incontinence—the inability to control urination. When BPH is found in its early stages, there is a lower risk of developing these problems.

How does the pathologist make the diagnosis?

You may notice BPH symptoms yourself, or your primary care physician may find prostate enlargement by performing a **digital rectal examination (DRE)**. If your physician suspects BPH, you may be referred to a urologist, a physician specializing in problems of the urinary tract and male reproductive system. Your doctor or specialist may conduct additional tests or studies. One procedure, called a **urine flow study**, involves urinating into a device that measures how quickly the urine is flowing. In a procedure called a **cystoscopy**, the urologist inserts a cystoscope (a small tube with a lens and light) through the urethra's opening in the penis. This test enables the urologist to determine the location and degree of the urethra obstruction.

What else does the pathologist look for?

To rule out cancer, your physician or specialist may recommend a prostate-specific antigen (**PSA blood test**). Produced by prostate cells, PSA is a protein that often rises to higher levels in the blood of men with prostate cancer.

Some physicians recommend a PSA test and DRE for all men age 50 or older or at age 40 if you are African American or have a family history of prostate cancer. The pathologist reviews the results of the PSA blood test as a possible indicator for cancer. If there are signs of prostate cancer, the urologist may recommend **rectal ultrasound**, which creates an image of the prostate on a display screen. Using this image as a guide, the urologist can gather a prostate **biopsy sample**. The pathologist examines this tissue under a microscope to diagnose whether or not the cells are benign or cancerous.

For more information, go to <http://kidney.niddk.nih.gov> (National Kidney and Urologic Disease Information Clearinghouse) or www.urologychannel.com (Urology Channel). Type the keywords *benign prostatic hyperplasia* or *BPH* into the search box.



Professional Pathology Services, PC

One Science Court • Suite 200 • Columbia, SC 29203

803.252.1913 • 866.252.1913 • www.ppspath.com

