



A man's concern: What to know about the prostate

As birthdays come and go, men may be inclined to think more about their prostate. And for good reason. Prostate problems grow more common with age and can become a source of inconvenience and even medical problems, reports the National Institute on Aging.

The good news is that many new and effective treatments are available. Also, many prostate-related problems—even some prostate cancer—may not need treatment at all.

Understanding prostate changes The prostate—a gland near the rectum and bladder—makes fluid that becomes part of a man's semen. It is about the size of a walnut and usually grows with age. This growth may cause prostate problems, though problems can also be caused by

infection, inflammation, or cancer.

Prostate problems can include: **Acute prostatitis.** This is an infection usually caused by bacteria. It may start suddenly, causing fever, painful urination, chills, and pain in the lower back or in the genital area. Antibiotics can quickly clear up the infection.

Chronic prostatitis. This is an ongoing inflammation or infection. Symptoms, such as pelvic pain or bladder infections, often come and go. Causes can include bacteria, kidney stones, or cancer. Medicines or dietary changes may help some forms of prostatitis. Only a doctor can tell one type of prostatitis from another.

Benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH). With BPH, the prostate enlarges and squeezes the urethra, affecting bladder control. You might notice an urge to urinate frequently, a weak flow, breaks in the urine stream, or leaking.

BPH is very common, since almost all men have an enlarged prostate by age 70.

Doctors may suggest watchful waiting, which involves monitoring symptoms to see if they get worse. Medicines, surgery, and nonsurgical treatments can shrink, relax, or remove all or some of the prostate.

Prostate cancer. One of the most common cancers in men, prostate cancer can grow without symptoms for years. It may stay put or spread to other parts of the body. Watchful waiting, surgery, and radiation are some of the treatment options.

Do all problems lead to cancer? Having prostatitis or BPH doesn't mean you'll get cancer, although some men have more than one condition.

Because many prostate problems have similar symptoms, you should see your doctor to evaluate problems or changes you notice. Also, regular checkups are important—especially as those birthdays add up.



For more information about prostate health, visit the New Mexico Department of Health Cancer Prevention and Control Section at cancernm.org/ccp/prostate.