

# Prostate Enlargement Is No Small Matter



Prostate enlargement is common amongst men when they reach 50 years of age. But what exactly is the prostate gland?

The prostate gland is the male sexual organ that produces semen, the fluid that helps sperm to "swim" during ejaculation. It sits beneath your bladder and surrounds your urethra — the tube that carries urine from the bladder and out of the body.

When it becomes enlarged, the prostate can compress your urethra and cause difficulty in urinating. The older a man, the more likely he is to experience prostate trouble.

Some of the common prostate problems are:

- Benign Prostate Hyperplasia (BPH): Benign means it's not cancerous; hyperplasia means an overactive growth
- Prostatitis: Inflammation or infection
- Prostate Cancer

## Facing Up To Benign Prostate Hyperplasia (BPH)

According to Dr Chin Chong Min, Consultant Urologist, Mount Elizabeth Hospital, many men seeking treatment for urination difficulty has BPH.

BPH may result in serious consequences if left untreated.

Dr Chin elaborates, "The typical symptoms of BPH are difficulty in passing urine, slow stream, dribbling of urine and urinary frequency, both day and night. If left untreated, the consequences are retention of urine, urine infections, bladder stones and kidney obstruction leading to kidney failure."

Diagnosing BPH requires a combination of various tests, including a physical examination, a Prostate Specific-Antigen (PSA) blood test (to screen for prostate cancer), ultrasound and a test that measures the speed of urine flow.

However, more often than not, men are in denial of their urinating habits and dismiss them as a part of the ageing process. Many men with BPH are also prone to develop prostatitis, which further aggravates their urination symptoms.

## Seek Medical Treatment Early

Medical therapy is recommended as the first line of treatment.

Two main groups of drugs are used. Taken at bedtime, the first group Alpha Blockers is 70% effective but carry a 10% risk of causing giddiness and low blood pressure.

Alpha Blockers help to relax the tone of the prostate and the bladder neck, thus increasing urinary flow and decreasing the need to urinate frequently. However, they do not reduce the prostate size.

This is where the second group comes in — 5-alpha-reductase Inhibitors which help decrease prostate size by reducing the levels of the male hormone within the prostate. They are more effective for treating large BPH glands.

According to Dr Chin, 5-alpha-reductase Inhibitors need two to three months to take effect and there may be side effects like loss of sexual drive and impotence.

When medications do not work or cause intolerable side effects, or the patient is unwilling to take long-term medications, surgery is the alternative.

## Surgical Treatment

Surgical treatment is indicated for patients who have failed medical treatment or develop complications such as retention of urine, repeated urinary infections, stone formation and kidney obstruction.

There are various forms of surgical treatment, namely:

### TURP (Transurethral Resection of Prostate)

Involving an endoscopic knife for prostate resection, TURP has been the gold standard in surgical treatment for the last 50 years. Certainly, it has shown to be effective in treating the symptoms with a long-lasting effect. This is a relatively short procedure where patients only need to be hospitalised for two days. The latest development in TURP uses electrical current to resect the obstructing portion of prostate endoscopically.

### Photoselective Vaporisation of Prostate (PVP) with Green Light Laser

The latest breakthrough in surgical treatment, PVP Green Light Laser combines the effectiveness of TURP with the safety and ease of a minimally invasive surgical treatment. It yields proven, more effective and longer-lasting results, compared to TURP.

Dr Li Man Kay, a Consultant Urologist at Gleneagles Hospital, frequently treats patients with BPH and he recommends PVP Green Light Laser.

"Complications are extremely low and there is minimal bleeding during surgery. The advantage about using the laser is that it can be done to patients who are taking anti-coagulants such as aspirin or plavix. Plus it preserves sexual function," says Dr Li.

It may be performed as day surgery or may merely require an overnight stay in hospital. Patients can quickly resume their normal activities after the procedure.

### How PVP Green Light Laser Works

Like TURP, PVP uses a powerful, green laser to vaporise the prostate and subsequently, reduce the prostate size.

The green light is selectively absorbed by the red prostate tissue, hence the term "photoselective". The laser is delivered through a fibre passed down a telescope (cystoscope), through which the prostate can be viewed.

There is minimal bleeding associated with this technique and with small prostates; it is possible to leave the patient without a catheter after the operation.

Once anaesthetised, a telescope is passed down the penis and into the bladder. The bladder and prostate are thoroughly inspected.

Using the laser under direct vision, the obstructing prostatic tissue is vaporised creating a cavity to allow passage of urine.

### The PVP Benefits

- PVP patients can resume low-stress activity or desk work in two to three days.
- Patients are usually able to return to a vigorous activity level in about four weeks.
- If a patient has had normal erectile function, no deterioration is expected post-operation.
- PVP has been shown to reduce the occurrence of retrograde ejaculation in patients.

## QUICK FACTS

Prostate enlargement is common in men over 50 years of age

Slow stream and frequent voiding especially at night

Urgent urination

Unable to hold urination

*Consult your doctor for advice*

## Prostate Enlargement You Do Not Need To Suffer In Silence

The good news is that treatment choices are increasingly, and readily, available. If you have urinary problems, consult your doctor now. Seeking early treatment is essential.

As one of Asia's largest healthcare providers, ParkwayHealth has an international reputation for its high quality clinical outcomes, and service excellence in various multi-disciplinary specialties including Urology. We have more than 17 urologists under one roof, specialised in sexual and urological conditions such as erectile dysfunction, prostate diseases, bladder disorders, urinary problems, urodynamics, andrology, uro-oncology, reconstructive urology and stone treatment.

**For more information or an appointment, call our 24-hour Helpline at 6735 5000.**

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