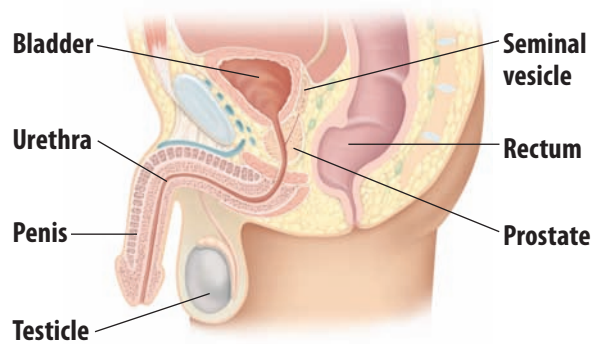


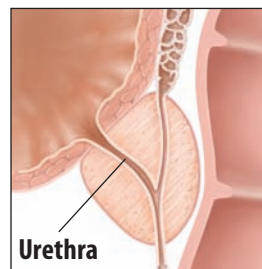
The Prostate

The **prostate gland** is part of the male reproductive system. It sits just below the bladder and surrounds the **urethra** (the tube that carries urine and semen out of the body). The prostate makes a fluid. This fluid mixes with fluid from the seminal vesicles and sperm from the testicles to make semen. During ejaculation, semen travels through the urethra and out of the penis.

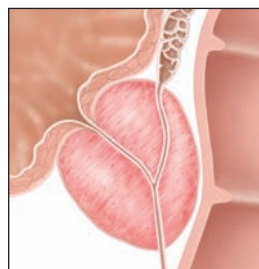


When Prostatitis Develops

Prostatitis is an infection or inflammation that causes the prostate to become painful and swollen. This narrows the urethra and can block the bladder neck. Prostatitis can cause urinary symptoms such as a burning sensation, pressure, or pain. In many cases, prostatitis is simply annoying. But it can sometimes make you very sick.



With a healthy prostate, urine flows easily through the urethra.



With an inflamed prostate, the urethra narrows. It's harder for urine to go through.

Prostate Health for Life

Prostate problems (including cancer) are more likely as you age. Regular checkups help ensure that any problems can be treated early. The American Cancer Society recommends yearly DRE and PSA tests for men over 50. You may need to be tested younger if you're at higher risk or have a family history of prostate cancer.

A Note to You and Your Partner

Prostatitis is not contagious. So, there's no reason to avoid sex during treatment. Sex may even help by clearing fluid out of the prostate.



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Prostatitis

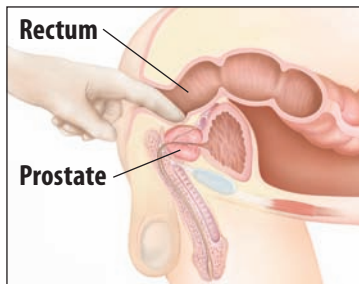


Understanding and Treating Inflammation of the Prostate

To Diagnose Prostatitis

A medical exam helps your doctor diagnose prostatitis. The following may be done:

- **Urine tests and cultures** test the urine for infection and signs of other health problems.
- **Digital rectal exam (DRE)** shows the prostate's size, shape, and texture. During DRE, the doctor inserts a lubricated, gloved finger into the rectum to feel the prostate.
- **Prostatic massage** may be done during DRE. The prostate is gently massaged until a few drops of fluid come out through the urethra. This fluid is checked for signs of inflammation and infection.



DRE may cause a little discomfort, but it takes less than a minute.

To Rule Out Other Problems

You may also have these tests:

- A **PSA (prostate specific antigen) test** is a blood test that measures PSA (a chemical made by prostate tissue). A high amount may mean the prostate is enlarged or inflamed or that cancer is present.
- **Transrectal ultrasound (TRUS)** may be done if cancer or an abscess is suspected. A small probe is inserted into your rectum as you lie on your side. An image of your prostate can then be seen on a video monitor.

Nonbacterial Prostatitis

With this form of prostatitis, the prostate is inflamed (swollen), but not infected. Possible causes include:

- Stress, which tightens the pelvic muscles
- Not ejaculating often enough, which can make fluid build up in the prostate
- Unknown reasons

Symptoms

Symptoms of nonbacterial prostatitis are often vague and tend to be mild. They may include:

- Frequent urination
- Pain in the lower abdomen or back
- Pain with ejaculation

Treatment

Your healthcare provider may suggest one or more of the following to relieve symptoms:

- Anti-inflammatory or muscle-relaxing medications
- Hot baths
- Relaxing while urinating
- Drinking more fluids or changing your diet
- Ejaculating often (to help drain the prostate gland and relax the muscles)



Bacterial Prostatitis

This form of prostatitis occurs due to a bacterial infection in the prostate. Bacterial prostatitis is often acute (sudden and severe). In some cases, bacterial prostatitis is caused by a sexually transmitted infection.

Symptoms

Symptoms of bacterial prostatitis may be severe and come on quickly. They may include:

- Fever and chills
- Low back pain
- Frequent and painful urination
- A less forceful urine stream
- Straining or being unable to urinate

Treatment

Antibiotics will be prescribed. Take all of your medication, even if you start to feel better. Your healthcare provider may also suggest bed rest, stool softeners, and drinking more fluids.

Chronic Prostatitis

Either form of prostatitis can develop into a chronic (ongoing) problem:

- Possible causes include repeated bacterial infections, stress, not ejaculating often enough, and unknown causes.
- Symptoms may come and go. They may include frequent urination, burning with urination, and lower abdomen or back pain.
- Treatment may include prescription medications, dietary changes, biofeedback techniques, and over-the-counter supplements or herbs.