

Prostate

Overview

The prostate is a gland that sits directly beneath the bladder. At ejaculation, the prostate secretes fluid into the urethra that protects and nourishes the sperm. Unfortunately, the prostate grows in almost all men over 50, and since the urethra runs right through the middle of the prostate gland, this growth tends to restrict urine flow. Enlargement of the prostate not associated with cancer or infection is called “Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia”. The prostate releases a protein called “prostate-specific antigen” or PSA, which is sometimes monitored as an indicator of prostate cancer. However, benign growth of the prostate also elevates PSA levels, so high PSA is not necessarily proof of cancer. PSA is simply one of a number of indicators that may lead to a recommendation for a biopsy.

Symptoms

Signs and symptoms of an enlarged prostate may include:

- Increased frequency of urination, often causing trips to the bathroom at night
- Decreased flow of urine
- Urge to urinate a second time, right after urinating (trouble emptying bladder)
- Urgency to urinate
- Difficulty initiating and maintaining urine stream

All these symptoms are related to the prostate narrowing the urethra as it passes from the bladder, through the enlarged prostate, on its way out. Since cancer also enlarges the prostate, the symptoms of prostate cancer can be identical.

When to see a doctor

Make an appointment to see your doctor if:

- You notice a change in frequency or quality of urination

It is advised that men over 50 have their PSA monitored, have their prostates manually checked (the finger test), and have ultrasounds of the prostate performed. Prostate cancer is so common, that all men should be vigilant