



Prostate protection

Are you at risk?

Signs of prostate problems include:

- problems with urination
- blood in semen or urine
- pain in the genitals, pelvis and/or lower back
- erection issues
- painful ejaculation

Larry Clapp PhD, prostate cancer survivor and author of *Prostate Health In 90 Days Without Drugs Or Surgery*, emphasises the importance of early diagnosis for a positive prognosis. Clapp recommends an annual digital rectal exam starting at age 40, followed by Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) test at age 45, and then every year after age 50. Ben Stiller, comedian and prostate cancer survivor, has said: "Taking the PSA test saved my life." If detected early, prostate cancer survival rates are better than 98 per cent; find it late, however, and survival rates drop below 26 per cent.

Herbs and nutritional therapies can ease discomfort and delay - or even avoid - the need for drugs or surgery. Naturopath Caroline Robertson investigates.

Prostate care is a vital men's health issue. One in seven Australian men over the age of 40 will experience prostate problems, with one in 31 dying from prostate cancer by their 85th birthday. Men of African or Caribbean descent, or with a family history of prostate disease, are two and a half times more likely to get prostate cancer.

Knowledge is power

The prostate is a walnut-sized gland located beside the bladder, and it enlarges naturally with age. Prostate disorders include benign prostate hypertrophy (BHP), a non-malignant enlargement of the prostate gland; prostatitis, or inflammation of the prostate; and prostate cancer, a malignancy which generally shows no symptoms in the initial stages.

Research suggests that stimulating circulation is pivotal to prostate health.


One study of 63,000 men, published in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*, showed that vigorous exercise was very beneficial for prostate health. Other factors which have been shown to reduce prostate cancer risk include: not smoking, maintaining a healthy weight, eating fatty fish at least once a week, eating tomato products four to seven times a week, and limiting processed meat to a maximum of three servings a week.

Mantak Chia, Taoist master and author of *Chi Kung for Prostate Health and Sexual Vigour*, advocates self-massage of the perineum followed by Kegel squeezes. Yoga poses which support prostate health include Butterfly Pose (Baddha Konasana), Hero Pose (Virasana) and Bow Pose (Dhanurasana). Sexual activity appears to help, theoretically by purging the prostate of carcinogens. A Harvard study of 30,000 men found that those who ejaculated more than 21 times a month had two-thirds the risk of prostate cancer compared to those who ejaculated only four to seven times a month. Cyclists may wish to consider limiting their training time, with one extensive study showing a six-fold increase in prostate cancer in cyclists who trained for over eight hours a week. This effect may be due to the repetitive compression on the perineum, which increases prostate inflammation.



Natural helpers

Eat manly meals

An alkalising diet, rich in vegetable polyphenols and fatty acids, is recommended for prostate health. Limit inflammation by reducing acidic and carcinogenic foods, such as sugar, red meat, trans fats and excess alcohol. Foods high in zinc, such as almonds, adzuki beans, and pumpkin, sesame and sunflower seeds, help prostate health; so do foods rich in vitamin C (red capsicum, broccoli, cauliflower, kale, Brussels sprouts) and omega-3 fatty acids (salmon, flaxseed oil). The antioxidant lycopene, found in apricots, tomatoes, watermelon and papaya, lowers the prostate-specific antigen (PSA) which is connected to many prostate problems. Beta-sitosterol, found in avocados, pumpkin seeds, pecans and wheatgerm, can reduce BHP symptoms. 

Bee pollen: Contains beta-sitosterol and has an anti-androgenic effect, which improves symptoms of BPH.

Epilobium: A herb with proven anti-inflammatory and antioxidant actions on the prostate; extracts have been shown to inhibit prostate cancer cells in vitro.

Horsetail, hydrangea, couch grass and stinging nettle: These herbs all ease urinary discomfort and BHP.

Lycopene: Inhibits disease progression in patients with BPH; slows or stops the growth of the prostate gland.

Saw palmetto: Reduces prostate inflammation and urinary issues.

Pygeum and Pinus pinaster: Both contain beta-sitosterol, which reduces urinary frequency and prostate swelling.

Pumpkin seed oil: Lowers testosterone-induced prostatic growth; normalises urination.

Quercetin: At a dose of 500 mg daily, this bioflavonoid effectively reduces prostatitis.

Selenium: Decreases free radical damage and is associated with a significantly reduced risk of prostate cancer.

Zinc: This antioxidant mineral is essential for a healthy prostate.

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