

UROLOGY

CHRONIC PROSTATITIS

The prostate — a walnut-sized gland situated below the bladder — can become inflamed. To learn about treatment options, it is important to determine the cause.

Prostatitis occurs when the prostate becomes inflamed, often causing painful or difficult urination. Other signs include pain in the groin, pelvic area or genitals and — sometimes — flu-like symptoms. Two common forms of prostatitis are chronic bacterial prostatitis and chronic pelvic pain syndrome.

Chronic bacterial prostatitis

Chronic bacterial prostatitis is an infection of the prostate that can linger for several months. Some patients get it after a urinary tract infection, when bacteria enter the prostate from the urethra through the backflow of infected urine. Bacteria can also infiltrate the prostate from stools from the rectum. A bout of acute bacterial prostatitis, where antibiotics fail to eliminate bacteria, can result in a recurring condition that is difficult to treat. Symptoms — such as blood in the urine or semen, and pain or burning with urination — begin slowly and last three months or longer. For some men, this condition may exist for several years before symptoms show.

Treatment This is usually treated with antibiotics. Painkillers may be prescribed if necessary. Most patients respond well to this treatment. Otherwise, suppressive low-dose, long-duration antibiotic therapy may be recommended.

When the chronic bacterial prostatitis is severe, or for men whose swollen prostate blocks urine flow, surgical removal of infected portions may be advised.

Chronic pelvic pain

A non-bacterial form of prostatitis, chronic pelvic pain is more common of the two. Patients have no bacteria in their urine but may present other signs of inflammation. Often, an exact cause cannot be identified. The condition is marked by urinary and genital pain.

Treatment This includes the use of alpha blockers — drugs that relax the muscles in the prostate and bladder to improve urine flow and reduce symptoms. Other drugs that reduce hormone levels may help shrink the prostate gland in some men. Many patients with chronic pelvic pain syndrome respond to a combination of treatments that include exercise, myofascial trigger point release, progressive relaxation, and counselling.

Some may be advised to avoid spicy foods and caffeinated or acidic drinks, and to also abstain from activities that aggravate the condition, such as cycling.

Prostatitis can be treated. By following the full course of treatment, the inflammation can be cleared. 



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