Men are blessed (or possibly cursed) with a gland that often requires medical attention with advancing age. The prostate is a chestnut-sized gland that lies between the bladder and rectum, fitting snugly around the urethra.

Most prostate problems occur in men near or over age fifty in the form of a benign growth, chronic inflammation or malignant tumor. One out of three men over the age of fifty has an enlarged prostate, and it becomes more common with age. Benign prostate hyperplasia or hypertrophy (BPH) is the medical term for an enlarged prostate. It is not always serious and can usually be controlled with a natural approach.

Symptoms appear gradually once the prostate reaches a size where it interferes with the release of urine through the urethra, causing symptoms of trickling or dribbling of urine when urinating and frequent urgency to urinate. The repeated urge to urinate may become most obvious at night, as a man must wake several times to urinate. Urinary flow is usually unchanged, other than starting or stopping becoming more difficult than usual. This is typically most noticeable in the morning. Urinary difficulties usually mean that the bladder is only being partly emptied, which can lay the foundation for the development of urinary stones and urinary tract infections. In more severe cases of BPH, incontinence develops.

Enlargement of the prostate is linked to hormonal changes that occur as men get older, similar to the menopausal changes that occur in women. Hormonal imbalances are usually due to a poor diet, nutrient deficiencies and, to some degree, hereditary influences. So, preventative measures for maintaining a healthy prostate are key.
Adding nuts and seeds to the daily diet can play a significant role in preventing and reducing prostate enlargement. Nuts and seeds contain essential fatty acids, zinc and other nutrients that inhibit the hormonal process, which causes swelling of the prostate. Unrefined, cold-pressed flax seed, walnut, pecan, pine nut, pumpkin and sesame seed oils are excellent sources of essential fatty acids. Use them liberally on fresh fruit and vegetable salads.

Fish oil (high in omega-3 fatty acids) has a similar effect to that of nut and seed oils. Pumpkin seeds are particularly rich in zinc. Chew them throughout the day or add to salads or cereal. Made into seed butter, with added herbs, pumpkin seeds become a delicious spread.

Add nutritional yeast to the daily diet to provide both zinc and vitamin B6. The body needs vitamin B6 to absorb zinc. Eggs and sardines also provide zinc with vitamin B6.

Cultured organic soy products like tofu and miso contain phytosterols, which have a beneficial regulating effect on hormone balance and prostate health. The high consumption of such soy products is the reason given by most scientists for the low number of prostate problems in Japan in comparison to Western countries, where people eat a lot of red meat.

**Essential foods for prostate health are organically grown, fresh leafy green vegetables, whole grains and raw wheat germ.** Freshly pressed juices of beets, celery, carrots, parsley, other green vegetables, citrus fruits and mangos are a concentrated source of these nutrients. In addition to being good sources of vitamin B6, these foods provide antioxidant nutrients, including vitamins A, C and E. If vegetables and grains are organically grown in good soil, they will also provide the important antioxidant selenium and remain free of carcinogenic pesticides. Selenium has recently been touted as an important mineral that may help protect the prostate.

**Avoid hydrogenated fats from processed foods like margarine and vegetable shortening. Limit the intake of saturated fats from red meat. These fats, in contrast to the beneficial essential fatty acids, exacerbate prostate enlargement. Also, limit the intake of sugar, caffeinated beverages and alcohol, all of which puts undue stress on the hormonal system. The higher the sugar intake, the worse any hormonal imbalance can become.**

**Also noteworthy are the spices turmeric, cumin, and garlic, which have all been shown to help protect the prostate.**
Saw Palmetto Liposterolic Extract (*Serenoa repens*)
Saw Palmetto has been shown to inhibit the enzyme 5-alpha-reductase responsible for causing prostate enlargement by converting testosterone to dihydrotestosterone (DHT). It is thought that high circulating levels of DHT stimulate prostate cells to grow abnormally large. High DHT is also blamed for acne as well as abnormal hair loss.

Plant Sterols (Beta-Sitosterol, Campesterol and Stigmasterol)
Featuring chemical structures similar to that of cholesterol, in double-blind clinical trials, these plant sterols have been found to be effective in reversing BPH. The mechanism of action is similar to that seen with saw palmetto.

Stinging Nettle (Urtica Dioica Root)
Clinical studies show that this highly popular herb increases urinary flow rate and may reduce the size of an enlarged prostate.

Grass Pollen Extract (Cernilton or Swedish Pollen)
Four double-blind studies indicate that pollen extract improves prostate symptoms, especially difficult urination, and frequent night urination (nocturia). The mechanism of action is unknown, but does not appear to be related to hormone modulation.

Pygeum Africanum
Several controlled and uncontrolled studies suggest that Pygeum Africanum may be effective for mild to moderate BPH and it appears to work by a similar mechanism as saw palmetto extract.

Lycopene
This carotenoid is responsible for the red color of tomatoes and the vegetable’s many healthy properties. Lycopene is the major carotenoid in human plasma and an important antioxidant used by the body to protect the prostate. Clinical studies suggest that lycopene may shrink tumors in men with prostate cancer.

Zinc Citrate
Zinc Citrate tends to be concentrated in the prostate gland, and helps the body to manufacture various hormones called prostaglandins. Deficiency in zinc prevents the body from synthesizing hundreds of hormones needed for optimal function. Zinc is also important for optimal mood, mind, memory and behaviour.

Selenium Chelate
This nutrient shows signs of promise for preventative measures. Although further studies are required, selenium is a powerful antioxidant mineral important for overall good health.
Other than skin cancer, prostate cancer is the commonest cancer found in North American men with an estimated 200,000 new cases each year and 30,000 deaths from the disease. According to the American Cancer Society three out of every four cases are slow growing and relatively harmless.

Conventional medicine is not unified in its approach to treatment of the disease. Watchful waiting, surgery, radiation, chemotherapy or prescription hormone therapies are all potential treatments. Some doctors will elect to do one or a combination of these, depending on their philosophy and/or the severity of the disease. A Complementary Medicine approach, however, can also do a great deal to help men protect their prostates with a more natural approach that involves fewer side effects.

The following diet, lifestyle and supplement suggestions summarize what can be done.

1. Exercise (walking, jogging, swimming) at least 30 minutes, three times weekly. Men under age 60 who are fit are four times less likely to develop prostate cancer than those less fit.

2. Increase your intake of essential fatty acids from plant or fish sources. Supplementation with fish oils (omega-3 fatty acids) can help offset the adverse effects of high saturated fat from red meat and dairy products.

3. Increase your intake of soy foods containing isoflavones (genistein, daidzein) which can dramatically lower prostate cancer cell growth. Isoflavones from kudzu and red clover are also effective in similar ways. Excessive soy in men may increase estrogen.

4. Eat more foods rich in the cancer-fighting antioxidant, lycopene. Lycopene is found in tomatoes, strawberries, watermelon, apricots, pink grapefruit and guava juice. Over 100 research articles advocate eating between 5 and 9 servings of fresh fruits (especially pomegranate) and vegetables (especially the cruciferous vegetables broccoli, kale, Brussels sprouts, cabbage and rutabaga) daily.

5. Supplement your healthy diet with other powerful antioxidants like vitamin C, E, selenium, zinc, green tea extract and remedies like beta-sitosterol, quercetin, saw palmetto, pygeum, nettles, licorice root extract, indole-3-carbinol, calcium-d-glucarate, probiotics, colostrums, curcumin, resveratrol, inositol hexaphosphate (IP-6) and various mushroom extracts, notably maitake and reishi.

6. From the prevention point of view, have more frequent sex. Australian researchers have found that men who are sexually active between the ages of 20 and 50 were the least likely to develop prostate cancer.
Avoid alcohol intake in any form, including beer and wine. Men who consume 10 or more drinks weekly can triple their risk of developing prostate cancer. Alcohol is a fungal toxin (mycotoxin) which has been postulated by some researchers to cause both prostate and breast cancer.

Stop smoking. Tobacco products contain numerous carcinogens, including cadmium, a heavy metal proven to increase prostate cancer risk. Cigarette smoke also contains fungal mycotoxins known to create cancer cells.

Reduce your exposure to xenobiotics (PCBs, plasticers, herbicides and pesticides) that cause DNA damage and alter hormone metabolism stimulating the prostate cells to be cancerous or to spread through out the body. Use organic fruits and vegetables when possible. Wash and peel all non-organic produce and avoid plastic containers, wrappers, cooking and storing utensils.

Limit or eliminate meats and dairy products due to their content of hormones and xenobiotics. Instead, choose organic meat and dairy products. Many dairy products contain recombinant bovine growth hormone, a genetically engineered hormone that can increase the risk of prostate cancer by at least 8 times.

Avoid all gonadal hormones (testosterone, androstenedione, DHEA, progesterone) and human growth hormone since, in excess, these are suspected to increase prostate cancer risk or spread.

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