Benign prostatic hyperplasia

What is benign prostatic hyperplasia?
The chestnut-shaped prostate gland is part of a man’s reproductive system. As a man gets older, his prostate may become larger. This condition is called benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH).

BPH isn’t cancer, but it can cause health problems, such as urinary tract infections and bladder and kidney damage. If you have BPH, you may have one or more of these symptoms:
- You feel as if you have to urinate (go to the bathroom) often, but when you try, only a small amount comes out.
- Your penis leaks urine.
- You wake up frequently during the night to urinate.
- Your urine stream is weaker than usual.

If you notice any of these symptoms, tell your healthcare provider.

How will my healthcare provider know I have BPH?
First, your healthcare provider will ask you questions about how often you urinate and if you’ve noticed any problems when you go to the bathroom. If it sounds like you might have BPH, some of these tests may be done:
- **Digital rectal exam.** Your healthcare provider will put a gloved finger in your rectum to check the size and shape of your prostate. This is often the first test.
- **Urinalysis.** You’ll be asked to urinate in a cup so your urine can be tested for signs of an infection.
- **Prostate-specific antigen blood test.** This blood test can help your healthcare provider tell whether you have BPH or prostate cancer, which can also cause the prostate gland to enlarge.
- **Postvoid residual.** Right after you urinate, your healthcare provider can use a small handheld bladder scanner to see if any urine remains in your bladder. Urine left in the bladder is a sign of BPH.

- **Urine flow study.** You’ll be asked to urinate into a special device that measures the speed and force of your urine flow. A slow or weak urine stream is a sign of BPH.
- **Rectal ultrasound.** Your healthcare provider may insert a small probe into your rectum to see an image of your prostate. This will feel slightly uncomfortable.

How will my BPH be treated?
Your healthcare provider will discuss different treatments with you, based on your test results. If you have a urinary tract infection, it will be treated first. Medicine is one treatment option that may relieve your BPH symptoms. Your healthcare provider also may suggest one of several minimally invasive procedures to relieve your BPH symptoms.

Sometimes, surgery to remove the enlarged part of your prostate may be the best long-term treatment for you. How long you’ll stay in the hospital will depend on the type of surgery you have and how quickly you recover.

Right after surgery, you’ll have a catheter in your penis for a few days to help you urinate.

What can I do to relieve my symptoms?
- Don’t let your bladder get too full. Urinate when you feel the urge, but try to go at least every 2 to 3 hours.
- Don’t drink too much alcohol or drinks containing caffeine, which may irritate your bladder.
- Don’t drink anything for an hour or two before bedtime so you don’t have to wake up to go to the bathroom.
- Don’t take over-the-counter medicines without checking with your healthcare provider. Some medicines, such as decongestants and antihistamines, make urinating difficult.
- Try to do some form of exercise, for 30 minutes a day.