

# Prostatitis



## What is the prostate?

The prostate is a walnut-sized gland that forms part of the male reproductive system. It is located in front of the rectum, just below the bladder.

One of its main functions is to squeeze fluid into the urethra during sexual climax. This fluid energizes the semen and makes the vaginal canal less acidic.

## What is prostatitis?

It is a condition that affects mostly young and middle aged men where the prostate becomes inflamed. Its symptoms are burning on urination and incomplete bladder emptying. These are non-specific symptoms and could easily be the symptoms of other conditions like Benign Prostate Enlargement or urinary tract infections making it difficult to diagnose.

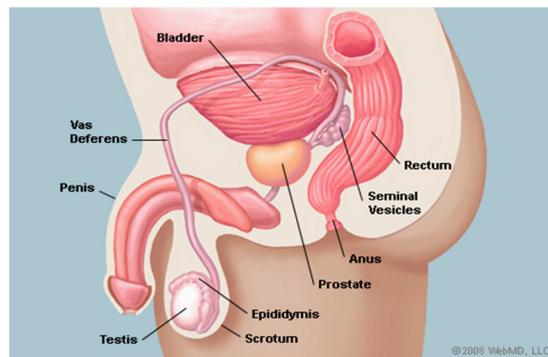


Fig 1: The Male Genitourinary System

## Types of Prostatitis

There are four different types of prostatitis:

1. **Acute bacterial prostatitis:** It is the least common, easiest to diagnose but can be life threatening. The symptoms are chills, fever, pain in the lower back and genital area; urinary frequency and urgency (particularly at night), and burning or painful urination. Analysis of the patients' urine would show bacteria and inflammatory cells.
2. **Chronic bacterial prostatitis:** This is relatively uncommon. It occurs when bacteria are able to survive in a part of the prostate. The patient has multiple urinary tract infections with the same bacterial cause.
3. **Chronic prostatitis/ chronic pelvic pain syndrome:** The most common but least understood form of prostatitis. It can occur in men of any age. Its symptoms are the same as acute bacterial prostatitis but they come and go away without warning. In the inflammatory kind white cells (cells that fight infection) may be found in the urine (when examined under a microscope). In the non-inflammatory kind, white cells are not seen in urine.
4. **Asymptomatic inflammatory prostatitis:** The patient does not have any symptoms but there are inflammatory cells found in his prostate fluid or semen. This form of prostatitis is looked for when doctors are looking for causes of infertility or testing for prostate cancer.

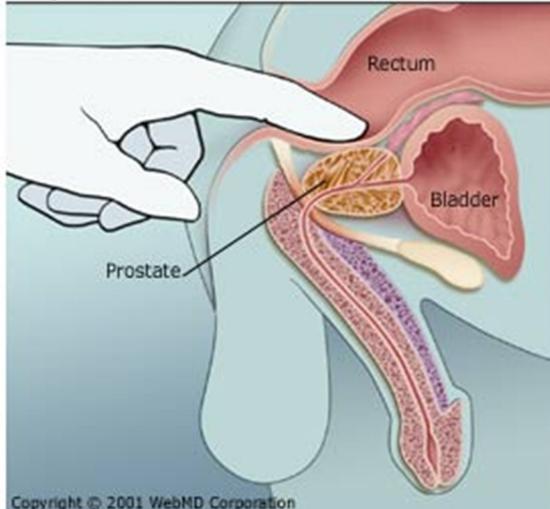
# Diagnosis

Your doctor will take a history of your symptoms and perform a **Digital Rectal examination (DRE)**. This is when a gloved finger is inserted into the rectum to feel the side of the prostate that lies next to the rectum. In prostatitis, the prostate may be enlarged or tender.

The doctor will also ask you for a **urine sample**. Two urine samples are sometimes collected. One before a prostate massage and the other after a prostate massage. A prostate massage is when the doctor strokes the prostate during a DRE. The urine sample collected is then examined under a microscope for inflammatory cells and bacteria.

Because the symptoms of prostatitis are common to other conditions, your doctor may order blood tests and scans to rule out other conditions like bladder stones, kidney stones, urinary tract infections to name a few.

## Digital Rectal Exam

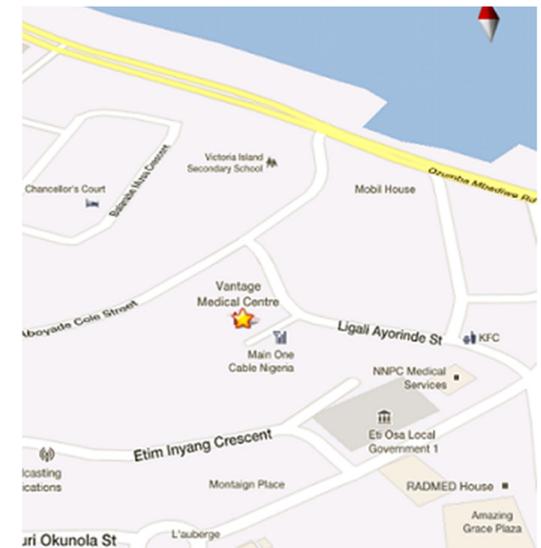


# Treatment

1. **Antibiotics:** Acute bacterial prostatitis may require a short hospital stay for IV fluids and antibiotics. Chronic bacterial prostatitis usually requires a prolonged course of oral antibiotics to treat it and sometimes, prophylactic antibiotics to prevent it from happening. Asymptomatic inflammatory prostatitis does not require any treatment.
2. **Alpha Blockers:** these drugs relax the bladder neck and the muscle fibres where the prostate joins the bladder.
3. **Pain killers:** usually non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs or aspirin.
4. **Prostate Massage:** in a procedure similar to a DRE can relieve symptoms.
5. **Surgery:** in cases of chronic bacterial prostatitis that does not respond to antibiotics. The surgery to remove the part of the prostate that is infected is called a Transurethral Prostatectomy. It is a last resort i.e. done only when other treatments have failed because it is not always curative and may make symptoms worse.
6. **In research:** heat therapy with microwave devices, drugs from natural extracts.

# Points to remember

- Prostatitis is inflammation of the prostate.
- It can be difficult to diagnose
- There are four different types of prostatitis
- It is important to see your doctor if you have any of the symptoms of prostatitis as in some cases it can be life threatening.
- Prostatitis is usually treated with antibiotics but may recur in some people.



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