

# Benign Prostatic Hypertrophy (BPH)

The conventional treatment for prostate disease is drugs and surgery. There are two types of drugs.

One type are called **alpha blockers**. These include Doralese (Indoramin), Flomax (Tamsulosin), Hytin (Terazosin) and Xatral (Alfuzosin). These reduce swelling around the prostate and work fairly well in reducing symptoms but they do not affect the course of the disease. In other words the symptoms come back when you stop taking them.

The other type of drugs are called **alpha reductase inhibitors** and they block the pathway which turns testosterone into DHT (see later). Proscar (Finasteride) does this. This makes the prostate smaller and is said to reverse the course of the disease. However there is doubt about this. Side effects are a bigger issue than with alpha blockers and they can disrupt sexual function. These drugs also increase the risk of diabetes by 33%.

## Nutrients

**Nutrients** can be very useful in prostate disease. A study of patients given **essential fats** showed an improvement in virtually every man who took them. **Zinc** is essential for prostate function and it has been known for decades that patients with prostate cancer have low levels of zinc. One trial of men given zinc supplements for 2 months (for benign prostate disease) showed that 73% had a reduction in prostate size and all had reduced symptoms. The nutrients **Lycopene** (especially from tomatoes), **Selenium**, and **Vitamin E** protect against prostate cancer.

Because nutrients are essential to life whereas herbs are not, there is a strong case for supplementing these first. Many seeds such as sunflower, pumpkin seeds, flaxseed and many nuts contain large amounts of essential fat and zinc. Do not roast or heat them or you destroy the fat.

Use **Zinc** 30mg three times daily to begin with and then reduce gradually to 30mg daily as symptoms improve. Zinc piconolate or zinc citrate may be the best form of zinc. Adding seeds and nuts to the diet will increase zinc intake.

Also add a good source of **essential fat**. This can be a pure Omega 3 fat such as flaxseed (also called linseed) or fish oils (Linseed oil gave an improvement in symptoms in 63% of patients in one study). Alternatively you could use a combined Omega 3 and 6 essential preparation (such as hemp oil) which may be better for long term use.

The advantages of using nutrients are that your whole body will benefit, not just the prostate. We know that 90% of the population is deficient in zinc and almost as many are short of essential fats.

## Foods

Men with benign prostate hypertrophy (BPH) given 3 tablespoons of ground flaxseed daily had the same benefit as taking the drug Proscar or Tamsulosin in one study. Other vegetables found to reduce the risk of BPH are garlic and onions.

## Herbs

There has been considerable interest in herbs as a treatment for prostate disease. The best known of these is the herb **saw palmetto**. A major international trial in 87 centres in 9 countries showed that this was as effective as Proscar but had far fewer side effects. In particular it was much less likely to cause impotence, loss of libido and ejaculatory problems. However recent trials have given variable results.

Several other herbs have shown promising results in trials. The results on **stinging nettle root** (*Urtica dioica*) have been consistently positive. Other herbs have shown positive results including **rye grass** (showing a 78% improvement in symptoms) and **Pygeum** (showing a 55% improvement and increases urine flow by 23%). The dose is 100 -200mg daily.

A recent study of saw palmetto (320mg of fatty saw palmetto) daily combined with extract of nettle root (240mg daily) has showed significant improvements in urine flow and reduction of prostate symptoms.

## The Hormone Story

The drug Proscar blocks the conversion of testosterone to DHT. Conventional wisdom has been that DHT, and to a lesser extent, testosterone are regarded as the villains in prostate disease. However facts contradict this. Both of these are high in young men who of course do not get prostate disease. Also certain workers have had excellent results in treating prostate disease with testosterone. Giving DHT in animals has been shown to reduce prostate cancer. One study found Proscar which stops production of DHT increased the rate of prostate cancer in high risk subjects.

Recent research suggests prostate disease is due a low ratio of testosterone to oestrogens (female hormones). This ratio gets greater as we age – we get less male and more female. Interestingly Saw palmetto helps correct this ratio by inhibiting the oestrogens whereas Proscar, which blocks the testosterone to DHT pathway, causes more testosterone to be converted to oestrogens. This pushes the ratio in the wrong direction.

The likely cause of these changes is gender-bender hormones in the environment such as plastics, pesticides and a wide variety of chemicals. These are difficult to avoid but eating unadulterated food (organic and non-processed), filtering water, avoiding major sources of air pollution such as air fresheners, paints, perfumes and sprays (which enter the body as soon as we

smell it) and being careful what we put onto our skin (most substances are rapidly absorbed into the body) will all help.