

The Aging Prostate Can We Talk?



by Channing Dallstream

About 60% of all men over age 60 will develop BPH (benign prostatic hyperplasia). That's a sobering statistic – with health-associated risks. So how can you improve your chances of being the odd man out? Not surprisingly a healthy lifestyle backed by good nutrition, of which supplements can play an important role, can tip the odds in your favor. Men, can we talk? Women, pass this article along to the men in your life!

BPH is a non-cancerous, gradual enlargement of the prostate that restricts the flow of urine from the bladder. It is the most common disorder of the prostate gland for men aged 45-74. It's a normal condition of aging with no specific cause, though hormone dysregulation seems to play a role. The symptoms, however, can be annoying with problems urinating and getting up several times a night with an urge to "go". Not only are these symptoms a nuisance, left untreated BPH can lead to urinary tract infections and kidney disease. Often BPH causes an elevation in a blood test called Prostate Specific Antigen or PSA. Part of a health screening for men over 50 includes this test since an elevated PSA may indicate another reason for concern, prostate cancer.



Keeping your prostate healthy may include supportive nutrition. Many of the supplements – saw palmetto, pygeum, stinging nettles, lycopene, zinc, pumpkins seeds and vitamin D – are explained in TyH Publications' *Healthy Prostate 101* article. What's making recent news is that omega-3 oils in particular are showing an increasing link to prostate cancer risk.

The Omega-3 Connection

BPH is much less common in other parts of the world especially Japan. This is thought to be in part due to the high amount of soy and members of the cabbage family in their daily diet, both of which contain isoflavones (phytoestrogens), and are cancer inhibitors. Omega-3s, an essential fatty acid high in cold-water fish; and nuts and seeds like pumpkin which are high in prostate protecting zinc are also lacking in the average American diet.¹

Interestingly, there's a test that measures EPA/DHA. Low levels of these protective compounds are associated with a higher risk of prostate cancer. The HS-Omega-3 Index test is available to physicians and researchers, and measures

the fatty acid content of red blood cells (RBC). In a recent interview with Richard Passwater Ph.D., one of the world's leading omega-3 researchers William Harris Ph.D. explains both the test and how high omega-3 serum levels guard against prostate cancer.² Harris cites a 2007 study which noted "higher levels of omega-3 fatty acids in whole blood were related to reduced risk of developing prostate cancer over a 13-year period."³

If you're considering omega-3, another nutrient may be required, according to magnesium expert Mildred Seelig M.D. who has studied magnesium's role in health and disease for more than 35 years. Dr. Seelig states this mineral is essential for the conversion of omega-3s into prostaglandins, substances that regulate the body's inflammatory response. Supporting nutrients C, B3, B6 and zinc also assist magnesium in the conversion process.⁴ Although the jury is still out; some studies suggest a elevated C-reactive protein (a blood marker of inflammation) increases cancer risk.⁵

Bottom line? Know your RBC levels of both of these helpful nutrients, omega-3 EPA/DHA and magnesium to be prostate-protective.

The Exercise Factor

A little exercise goes a long way, according to Harvard University's Health Professionals Follow-up Study. In most other countries walking to and from work, mass transit or other daily activities like grocery shopping is commonplace. Those who sat more than 41 hours a week were twice as likely to develop the disease. Add up the number of hours spent sitting at work, during a commute or after work watching TV and you probably exceed 41 hours. However, men who exercised regularly (30 minutes daily of moderate activity) were less likely to develop BPH. Exercising three hours or more weekly cuts the risk of developing BPH in half.⁶



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The Aging Prostate

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Do Seek a Professional

Do not self-diagnose. Taking care of your prostate is a healthy thing to do – nutrients, omega-3 and exercise, too – but know that BPH and prostate cancer can share symptoms, it is important to maintain regular physicals to track changes. Due to the slow growing nature of an enlarged prostate, most urologists take a “wait and see” approach in treatment. It is generally recommended that men obtain a baseline PSA by age 50 and monitor changes annually. As always, keep your health care professional informed of any herbal remedies you take.



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