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Aging of the Male Reproductive System

- Alternative Names
- Definition
- What is the information for this topic?

Alternative Names Age-related changes in the male reproductive system

Definition Unlike women, men do not experience a sudden change in fertility or function of their sex organs. Instead, changes in their reproductive system develop slowly over time.

What is the information for this topic? Several changes occur in the male reproductive system with age. These changes are considered a normal part of aging.

As a man ages:

- ❖ • His testes make less of the male hormone called testosterone.
- ❖ • The tubes that drain the testes become less elastic.
- ❖ • Sperm production decreases, which may slightly decrease fertility. However, older men can still father children.
- ❖ • The prostate gland, which helps make semen and is located under the bladder, becomes enlarged.
- ❖ • This condition is called benign prostatic hyperplasia and may cause problems with urination.
- ❖ • The penis often gets slightly smaller.
- ❖ • getting and keeping a firm erection becomes more difficult.
- ❖ • Ejaculation may become more difficult and occur less often.
- ❖ • The ability to have repeated ejaculation is often decreased.
- ❖ • The sexual drive may decrease slightly.

Again, these are all considered normal with increasing age. Other conditions are more common in the older age group, but are not normal. Impotence is not considered normal at any age. Impotence can be caused by:

- ❖ • Circulation problems, such as clogged arteries
- ❖ • Nerve damage, which may occur after prostate gland surgery or from diabetes
- ❖ • Medications, such as drugs used to treat high blood pressure.
- ❖ • Depression or anxiety

If impotence does occur, there are treatments available. A doctor can discuss the treatments available.

Many men have a gradual decrease in their sex drive with age. Sexual responses may also become slower and less intense. However, a total lack of interest in sex is often a sign of underlying problems. Sometimes these problems relate to social changes. Medical conditions such as depression and rarely even cancer are also possible causes.

The normal changes in the prostate gland with age may cause problems. An enlarged prostate gland increases the risk of:

- Urinary tract infections, which may involve the bladder, prostate or kidneys. These infections can sometimes become serious and rarely, may cause death.
- A backup of urine into the bladder and kidneys if the prostate blocks urine flow. This may be serious and can sometimes cause kidney damage or failure.

Prostate cancer is very common as men get older. It is the most frequent cause of cancer in men. It is often treatable and very slow growing. Because it is so common, however, it is the second leading cause of cancer death in men. Cancer of the testicles is also possible, though more commonly seen in younger men.

Though these issues may not be easy to talk about, they can affect health. Treatment is available for conditions such as an enlarged prostate or impotence. A doctor should be consulted for any concerns.