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Living with BPE

The underlined terms are listed in the glossary.

Many men with BPE have to deal with lower urinary tract symptoms (LUTS) as they grow older. For some, this causes a lot of unhappiness and bother, while others experience only mild discomfort.

What's more, different people can experience the same symptoms differently. For example, one man can suffer greatly from waking up at night to urinate while another may hardly be affected by it. That is why your personal experience and your quality of life should not be underestimated. They are as important as diagnostic tests and treatment results.

Quality of life involves both physical and psychological health. It is important not only to feel healthy but also to feel free of the psychological pressure of living with BPE. There are many ways to keep the symptoms under control. They should not stop you from being happy in your relationships and participating in the

social, cultural, and economic life of your community. Seek help if your symptoms bother you: consult your family doctor, general practitioner, or a urologist.

Effects on your social life

Symptoms associated with BPE, such as urgency or the need to urinate often, can have a negative effect on your social life. Some men suffer so much from these symptoms that they avoid all social activities. They are afraid to find themselves in a situation where there is no toilet nearby. Furthermore, losing sleep because of the need to urinate at night may lower energy levels and make it more difficult to maintain daily activities.

Avoiding social activities may seem the easiest way to deal with the problem, but it can lead to isolation and prevent you from fully enjoying your social life. Get professional advice from your urologist, who can help you to deal with your symptoms.

Personal relationships and sex

Symptoms caused by BPE can have a negative effect on your personal relationships and sex life. It can be difficult to feel attractive and confident or be intimate with your partner when you do not always feel in control of your body. Episodes of incontinence or urgency can be embarrassing and lower your self-esteem. Side effects of drug treatment such as lack of sexual drive or erectile dysfunction can also add to these feelings.

These changes can be very difficult to deal with because for most men sexuality remains important throughout their whole life. Some men may even go into denial or suffer from depression. That is why the effect of BPE on the quality of life should not be underestimated.

Living with BPE is not only challenging for you but also for your partner. Your intimacy as well as your daily interaction may be affected. Your partner may suffer without saying much, so it is very important that you openly discuss the best way to cope with this condition.

It may be uncomfortable to discuss your sex life with a urologist, but it is the most effective way to deal with your concerns. Together with your partner and your urologist you can identify what is important in your sex life and choose the best treatment option. There are many ways to relieve your symptoms and improve your sex life, which will make it easier to live with BPE.

Seeking help

Lower urinary tract symptoms (LUTS), especially if they are very bothersome, are a very intimate and private condition. Many men choose not to discuss it with anybody or not to go to their doctor because they:

- Are afraid they may have an incurable disease
- Are worried about a wrong diagnosis
- Do not have easy access to a doctor
- Have had a negative experience in the hospital
- Have friends or relatives who had a negative experience when treated for a similar condition
- Do not know about possible treatment options
- Have financial issues
- Feel isolated because of their age or condition

While these reasons may seem convincing they should not prevent you from seeking help and improving your quality of life. Do not let a prostate condition rule your life.

Questions to ask your doctor

You may have a lot of questions about your condition. EAU Patient Information on BPE covers many of these questions but it does not deal with your personal situation. Your urologist is the best person to discuss this with and you should not feel embarrassed about addressing any of your concerns.

Here are some of the questions you may ask your doctor:

- What are my test results and what do they mean?
- Do I have cancer?
- Why is this happening to me?
- What will happen in the next months and years if I don't get treatment?
- What will happen in the next months and years if I do get treatment?
- Why do you recommend this treatment option for me?
- What can I expect from that treatment?
- Will it cure my condition?
- How long will I need to be treated for?

This information was updated in September 2013.

This leaflet is part of EAU Patient Information on BPE. It contains general information about benign prostatic enlargement. If you have any specific questions about your individual medical situation you should consult your doctor or other professional healthcare provider.

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The content of this leaflet is in line with the EAU Guidelines.

You can find this and other information on urological diseases at our website: <http://patients.uroweb.org>

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