

# Lower Urinary Tract Symptoms in Men

## What are lower urinary tract symptoms?

Lower urinary tract symptoms (LUTS) are a very common problem, especially in men over the age of 65 years. They can be caused by various conditions.

LUTS are usually divided into storage of urine (also called irritative) and voiding (also called obstructive) symptom groups.

- Voiding symptoms include: poor stream, hesitancy, intermittent flow and straining when passing urine.
- Storage symptoms include: increased frequency and urgency of passing urine, urge incontinence and needing to get up to pass urine at night.

Other symptoms may include feeling the need to pass urine again after having just passed urine. Also, having some dribbling of urine after you have been to the toilet.

## What are the causes of lower urinary tract symptoms?

There are various causes of LUTS. The more common causes include:

- **An enlarged prostate.** The prostate gland is situated around the neck of your bladder. When this gets bigger it can cause voiding symptoms. (See separate leaflet called '*Prostate Gland Enlargement*' for more details.)
- **Overactive bladder.** As men (and women) get older, it is more common to develop bladder control problems. Your bladder may also be less able to store urine. This leads to you needing to pass urine more frequently and can even lead to leakage of urine at times (incontinence).
- **Water balance problems.** As people get older it becomes harder for the body to reduce the amount of urine that they pass at night. This leads to the need to pass urine more often at night. Therefore at the age of 65 and over it can be normal to pass urine at night once a night.

Other causes of LUTS include diabetes mellitus, urinary infections, bladder stones, prostate cancer, bladder cancer and neurological conditions (eg, multiple sclerosis).

## What tests are commonly performed?

The tests you may have will vary depending on your symptoms.

Your doctor may examine your prostate to see how big it is. This is done by inserting a gloved finger through the anus into your rectum to feel the back of your prostate gland.

The size of your bladder may be assessed by examining your abdomen.

The most common tests performed include:

- A urine dipstick test to exclude an infection in your urine or any blood in your urine.
- A blood test for glucose to exclude diabetes.

Lower urinary tract symptoms (LUTS) are very common in older men. They include symptoms such as reduced stream of passing urine and also needing to get up to pass urine at night. There are different causes of LUTS. Therefore, different treatments may

be advised, depending on the cause. Some men even choose not to have treatment if their symptoms are not too bothersome and the cause is not serious.

Other blood tests may also be performed - for example, to test the function of your kidneys, and also a PSA test. These tests vary between cases.

You may be asked to complete a urinary frequency volume chart on which you will be asked to document the times that you pass urine and also the amount of urine you have passed each time.

### **What self-help treatments are available?**

The following you can do yourself, which you may find help your symptoms:

- Reduce the amount of fluid you drink. There is no correct amount of fluid for you to drink but, if you are drinking too much, you can often improve your symptoms by reducing your fluid intake.
  
- Reduce drinking in the evening. You should try to drink as little as possible after 4 pm if you are having night-time symptoms.
  
- Try to anticipate times when urinary frequency and urgency are likely to be most inconvenient, and reduce the amount that you drink beforehand. For example, when you go out, don't drink much for 2-3 hours before you go out. However, do not reduce the total amount of fluid to less than 1.5 litres each day.
  
- Consider changing what you are drinking. Alcoholic, fizzy and caffeine-containing drinks can all make LUTS worse. You should stop drinking these to see if this improves your symptoms.
  
- If you are a smoker then stopping smoking may significantly improve your symptoms, as nicotine irritates the bladder.
  
- Try to train your bladder. This means you should try to hold on to urine for longer if you are experiencing a frequent desire to pass urine. If you can, you should try to gradually increase the time between visits to the toilet and also increase the amount of urine that you pass each time. The bladder muscle can be trained to expand more in this way.
  
- If hesitancy is a problem - try to relax when standing to pass urine.
  
- If urgency is a problem - try some distraction techniques such as breathing exercises and mental tricks (for example, counting) to take your mind off the bladder.
  
- Pelvic floor exercises. These can help you to hold on to urine for longer and also without having accidents. You use your pelvic floor muscles if you try to interrupt your flow of urine. You should try to tighten these muscles for around 10 seconds, at least 10 times each day.

### **What other treatments are available?**

The treatment for your LUTS will depend upon the underlying cause and also on how much your symptoms are bothering you and interfering with the quality of your life. For example, if you have an enlarged prostate gland then you may be offered a medicine to shrink your prostate or an operation to remove some of your prostate gland. Different operations can also be performed for men with other symptoms.

Medicines can also be effective to improve symptoms of an overactive bladder and storage symptoms, and also can improve symptoms of passing urine in the night. If you are experiencing problems with continence of your urine, then you may benefit from using a catheter to drain the urine from your bladder. Many men use catheters just to empty their bladders so they do not have a catheter in all the time. However, some men may need to have long-term catheters. This will be discussed with you in more detail by your doctor if you are likely to benefit from this.

You may be referred to a specialist, especially if your symptoms have not improved with some of the self-help measures or with some medication. You may also be referred if you need further tests.

Comprehensive patient resources are available at [www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk)

For further assistance please contact:

NHS Buckinghamshire PALS (Patient Advice & Liaison Service) on freephone 0800 328 5640 or email: [Patientexperience.service@buckinghamshire.nhs.uk](mailto:Patientexperience.service@buckinghamshire.nhs.uk)

#### Further help and information

##### Prostate UK

6 Crescent Stables, 139 Upper Richmond Road, London SW15 2TN

Tel: 020 8788 7720 Web: [www.prostateuk.org.uk](http://www.prostateuk.org.uk)

##### References

- [Lower urinary tract symptoms](#), NICE Clinical Guideline (May 2010); *The management of lower urinary tract symptoms in men*
- [LUTS in men, age-related \(prostatism\)](#), Clinical Knowledge Summaries (August 2010)
- [Gravas S, Melekos MD](#); Male lower urinary tract symptoms: how do symptoms guide our choice of treatment? *Curr Opin Urol.* 2009 Jan;**19(1):49-54. [abstract]**
- [Roehrborn CG](#); Currently available treatment guidelines for men with lower urinary tract *BJU Int.* 2008 Nov;**102 Suppl 2:18-23.**

##### Disclaimer: This leaflet has been copied from the EMIS website

This article is for information only and should not be used for the diagnosis or treatment of medical conditions. EMIS has used all reasonable care in compiling the information but make no warranty as to its accuracy. Consult a doctor or other health care professional for diagnosis and treatment of medical conditions. For details see our [conditions](#).

© EMIS 2010 Reviewed: 7 Dec 2010 DocID: 13541 Version: 1

For the planned review period see the [Data Creation and Quality Control Process](#)