

The Latest Treatments for an Enlarged Prostate or “BPH”

When it comes to issues of health, Aussie men tend to ‘grin and bear it’ instead of seeking medical help. Not only can this exacerbate these and related conditions, it leads to a lower quality of life. For health matters such as an enlarged prostate, there are a number of treatment options available.

What is the Prostate Gland?

The prostate is a gland at the bladder neck opening, consisting of three lobes and it aids in the production of semen amongst other things. Due to its location in the body, as it becomes enlarged, it can cause **voiding problems, bladder discomfort, urinary retention or infections**, and can even **affect the kidneys** through increased pressure in the urinary system. Medically-known as Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia or BPH, it is a common ailment amongst men, however it does not need to be endured.

Symptoms of BPH

An enlarged prostate can press on the urethra (channel that passes through the prostate), **obstructing the flow of urine**. This prevents the usual process of urination, causing problems such as increased frequency (both day and night), weak flow, urgency, burning, interrupted stream, and an inability to completely empty the bladder.

Treatments

Previously, BPH had been treated with medication or a conventional surgical procedure known as a TURP. Now there are **three more-advanced and minimally-invasive** treatments used to combat these conditions:

GreenLight Laser Therapy - This procedure is performed with a small fibre that is inserted into the urethra through a special instrument. The fibre delivers high-powered laser energy, which quickly heats up the prostate tissue, causing the tissue to **vaporise**. This process is continued until all

of the enlarged prostate tissue has been removed. **Natural urine flow is rapidly restored** and urinary symptoms are quickly relieved in most patients. Typically an overnight stay is required, though in some cases, if a patient travels a long distance to have the procedure, has other medical conditions, or is in frail condition, a longer stay may be recommended. Greenlight laser therapy can also be used on **patients who take blood thinning** agents so they do not need to stop them.

Rezum Water Vapour Therapy

- Rezum is **the newest, minimally-invasive treatment** that reduces BPH symptoms without the side effects commonly associated with medication. This procedure uses the **thermal energy stored in a few drops of water** to treat the excess prostate tissue. No tissue is removed during the procedure, but relies on the body's natural systems to shrink the treated prostate tissue. This generally requires an overnight stay depending on the patients other health conditions. Most patients see symptom **improvement within two weeks**, and are able to return to regular activities within a few days. Most prostates can be treated with this technique.

Urolift - The Urolift procedure is quite different to the other two therapies as it **does not rely on tissue removal/shrinkage** like the other procedures. Urolift involves placement of several retractors or anchors into the sides of the prostate to **increase the urethral opening** down the middle of the prostate. In effect it pulls the prostate lobes away from each other. It is best for men with prostates under small-medium sized prostates.

Risks of prostate procedures for BPH

In general all these new, minimally invasive procedures for BPH procedures are **very well-tolerated** there are some risks which need to be considered. These include urinary frequency and stinging after the operation which generally last 1-2 weeks. There are very small risks of bleeding and infection as well. After the TURP and Greenlight laser operation there is usually a substantial decrease in the amount of semen that is ejaculated. This is **uncommon to happen after Rezum and is very rare with Urolift**. It is important to note though that with all treatments **erectile function and the ability to orgasm is not affected** by any treatments. The Rezum procedure also requires a catheter for up to 1 week whereas the Greenlight Laser only for 1-2 days. The Urolift procedure can be done either with an overnight catheter or even as a day case without a catheter.

As you can appreciate, there are many options now to treat men who have symptoms of BPH. It is important to get a **comprehensive assessment** by a qualified **urological surgeon** to determine which treatment is best suited to your **particular clinical situation**.

By the age of 80, approximately 80% of men have BPH. Not only can this condition affect a man's health, it can also affect his **quality of life**. With various treatments available almost **all men with BPH can be helped** so there should be nothing stopping you from making that all-important appointment with your specialist **urological surgeon**.

**Courtesy Dr Darren Katz
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