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HOLISTIC HEALTH NOTEBOOK

Men, this column is for you

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If you are over the age of fifty, your chances of developing prostate difficulties are about 50/50. The age of 60? About 60 percent. And so the numbers increase with increasing age.

Benign prostatic hypertrophy (BPH) is more common than cancer. It seems like just about every man I talk to about health complains about getting up in the middle of the night to urinate. They are frustrated but so are their wives. Between the two of them, it's lucky that either of them get enough sleep. BPH is not only annoying but can lead to more serious problems like compromised kidney function and secondary infections in the bladder and upper urinary tract.

The symptoms of PBH include progressive urinary frequency, and increased urgency in the need to urinate and frequent nocturia (getting up in the middle of the night to urinate). Men can also experience hesitancy and intermittency, with decreased size and force of the urinary stream. According to the Merck Manual, "Sensations of incomplete emptying, terminal dribbling, almost continuous overflow incontinence, or complete urinary retention may ensue."

If you are experiencing these symp-

toms, please consult a doctor for an accurate diagnosis and treatment immediately, before the symptoms worsen, or to preclude the possibility of other conditions like cancer.

The best route is prevention. Fortunately, simple, inexpensive dietary changes can greatly reduce your chances of developing prostate difficulties.

Eat pumpkin seeds. According to one source, pumpkin is used for dysuria secondary to benign prostatic hyperplasia and for bladder irritation. Enjoy a blend of pumpkin seeds with sunflower seeds, mixed with raisins for a wonderful, healthy snack.

The herb saw palmetto is well researched in its role in reducing the symptoms of BPH, as well as a mild diuretic and to improve sexual vigor. Multiple clinical studies have shown that saw palmetto significantly improves urinary symptoms such as frequent urination, painful urination, hesitancy, urgency, and perineal heaviness. It also decreases nocturia (middle of the night urination), improves peak and mean urinary flow and lowers residual urine volume in patients with BPH. Saw palmetto is good stuff.

The mineral zinc is incredibly important to prostate health. Zinc inhibits the secretion of prolactin, a hormone that increases the uptake of testosterone by the prostate, leading to increased levels of the hormone metabolite DHT (dihydrotestosterone), one of the likely causes of BPH. Some medications block

the absorption of zinc from food; coffee consumption and foods that are high in phytates, bran, calcium or phosphorus (meat and soft drinks) may decrease zinc absorption. Zinc intake and absorption in vegetarian diets may be lower so supplementation is probably essential if a vegetarian diet is preferred.

The combination of glycine, alanine, and glutamic acid has been shown to relieve many of the symptoms of BPH. In a controlled study of 45 men, nocturia was relieved or reduced in 95 percent of the study group, urgency reduced in 81 percent, and frequency reduced in 73 percent. The amino acids may act as inhibitory neurotransmitters and reduce the feelings of a full bladder.

Lycopene (from tomatoes) is known to reduce the risk of developing prostate cancer by 83 percent.

Higher alcohol consumption is associated with BPH (sorry, guys). Essential fatty acids from flax oil, particularly the high lignan oils, is preventive.

No, you don't have to take all these nutrients separately. Several companies provide combination products that do the work for you. The only thing they don't provide is the pumpkin and sunflower snack. You have to do that yourself. ■

— Carol Simontacchi is the owner of the Island Nutrition Center on Sanibel. She can be reached at 472-4499 or on the Web at www.islandnutritioncenter.meta-ehealth.com.

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