Digital Rectal Examination of the Prostate Gland

The prostate gland is only found in men. It lies just beneath the bladder (see diagram). It is normally about the size of a chestnut.

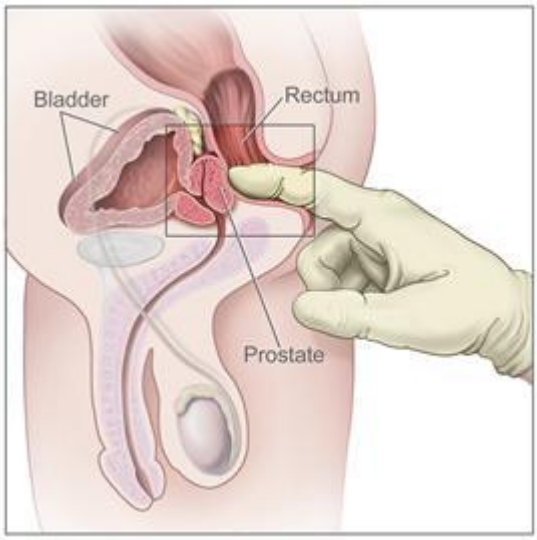
The urethra (the tube which passes urine from the bladder) runs through the middle of the prostate. The prostate's main function is to produce fluid which protects and enriches sperm.

The prostate often gets bigger ('enlarges') gradually after the age of about 50. By the age of 70, about 8 in 10 men have an enlarged prostate. It is common for older men to have urinary symptoms caused by a benign (non-cancerous) enlargement of the prostate. Some men also develop prostate cancer

If a doctor wishes to assess your prostate gland an examination (Digital Rectal Examination) in combination with a blood test (PSA) may be done.

To examine the prostate gland a gloved finger is inserted through the anus into the rectum to feel the back of the prostate gland. This allows the doctor to check if the prostate feels to be a normal shape and size.

While some patients may find the examination a little embarrassing it should not be a painful test. The doctor will reassure you and talk you through the examination so that you can know what to expect.



Digital rectal examination of the prostate