

You've watched your dad struggle with a pesky prostate and you're sure you don't want that kind of trouble: those night-time trips to the bathroom, the anxiety about cancer. Who needs that kind of grief? Still, you've read the headlines about Saw Palmetto, but you don't know how much about them. But you certainly don't want to spend half your time at movie theater in the men's room and, most of all, you don't want to lose your prostate, the gland whose function is extremely important to you.

Certainly the prostate tends to provoke problems. A walnut-sized gland that surrounds the urethra at the neck of the bladder, one of the prostatic duties is to secrete fluid for sperm. When a man ejaculates, 90% of his ejaculate consists of prostate fluid, which protects sperm.

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The wise man seeks early prostate protection: according to Dr. Andrew Weil, author of *Spontaneous Healing* (Knopf), older men often are troubled with enlargement of the prostate, what's politely referred to as benign prostatic hypertrophy (BPH). BPH causes a host of annoyances: If your prostate is enlarged, you may have increased frequency of urination, decreased force, dribbling and waking at night to empty your bladder. Cancer of the prostate is a very common form of cancer in men, its possibility increasing with age. It is more likely to occur in men who eat a high meat, high fat diet, few fruits and vegetables and little fiber.

Currently prostate cancer is the chart-topping cancer among men over 50. One in eight men will develop prostate cancer and one in 20 of them will die from it. Although men in their twenties can suffer from BPH, it usually surfaces later in life. It is estimated that half of all men have BPH by the age of 60 and 90% will suffer from it by age 85. Sometimes prostate cancer is a virulent from that runs silently, undetected, then launches surprise attacks that kill.

On the other hand, prostate cancer usually develops slowly. When caught early, this disease can often be eradicated; if discovered after spreading, it can still be treated (although the difficulty increases). A regular prostate exam every year after reaching age 40 is imperative.

The spotlight blazed on Saw Palmetto when the prestigious *Journal of The American Medical Association* singled it out for its effectiveness in relieving bladder problems from enlarged prostate, with virtually no side effects. The study was widely publicized and considered a solid information of Saw Palmetto's benefits.

The *European Journal of Herbal Medicine* 1998 published a nearly simultaneous and equally endorsing study on saw palmetto, noting its efficacy in reducing inflammation, spasms and

edema. Researchers also suspect it can inhibit prostate enlargement.

Saw Palmetto, a small palm tree native to the Atlantic Coast of North America and the West Indies, bears berries that have a long history in folk medicine. Recent clinical studies have demonstrated “the therapeutic effect of the fat-soluble extract of Saw Palmetto berries to greatly improve the signs and symptoms of an enlarged prostate. The purified fat-soluble extract is a well-defined medicinal plant extract containing between 85% and 95% fatty acids and sterols. That appears to inhibit dihydrotestosterone, the compound that causes prostate cells to multiply excessively.

*Nature's Health Prostagone*