

Ensuring a healthy, happy prostate

By Joanne Fox



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On average, a man's prostate is about the size of a walnut.

But like a piece of gravel in your shoe, it can provide equal levels of discomfort if ignored.

June is Men's Health Month and keeping that prostate happy is critical.

The prostate's main function is to produce fluid as part of the male reproductive system. The prostate surrounds the urethra (the tube that empties the bladder) so when problems arise in the prostate, it can lead to issues with urine retention or leaking.

According to Dr. Leah Noel, physical therapist at FYZICAL Therapy & Balance Centers of Dakota Dunes, if your prostate is working well, you generally have no symptoms.

"Some common signs of prostate issues are trouble excreting urine, as well as leaking urine," she said. "It is not, however, uncommon for men to have no noticeable symptoms, which is why regular blood test screenings are important. These are often done by primary care providers."

Dr. Mallory Hertz, the FYZICAL center's director, added that prostate cancer is the number one cancer in men.

"If cancer is indicated on blood test results, a urologist will likely perform a biopsy to get samples of the prostate to check for cancer," she said. "One of the courses of treatment is a radical prostatectomy -- removal of the prostate."

Dr. Hertz observed that most men do quite well with the surgery; however, the biggest issue after surgery is incontinence or urine leaking.

"When the prostate is removed, the anatomy is changed so the pelvic floor has to do different and more work to maintain continence than before surgery," she said. "Research recommends 4 to 6 weeks of exercise prior to surgery. The stronger you are before surgery, the better you will recover after. This will help solidify nerve connections, so the muscles are easier to activate after surgery."

A specially trained pelvic floor physical therapist can help make sure that an individual is doing the contraction correctly and can set up an appropriate exercise routine, Dr. Hertz noted.

"At FYZICAL, we have three therapists trained in pelvic health," she said. "That is the most years of combined pelvic experience in one clinic and the only clinic in Siouxland that specializes in male pelvic health."

Dr. Noel stated that just like any system in the body, healthy living is the key to keeping the prostate happy.

"Maintaining a healthy weight, not smoking, eating fresh fruits and vegetables and speaking with a primary care physician about getting PSA levels tested are all critical to good prostate health," she said.

It's no surprise that a supportive and understanding partner is also necessary for health and healing, Dr. Noel pointed out.

"The patient is usually frustrated already so patience is key," she said. "FYZICAL also has a biofeedback machine to monitor pelvic floor musculature and help a patient visually see what a muscle is doing to help integrate strengthening into a plan of care -- resulting in wonderful success stories."

Let FYZICAL be a part of your journey to loving your life again - no referral needed.



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