

## Men's Health: Treatments Relieve Prostate Woes

It is almost as inevitable as gray hair. As men age, their prostate gland commonly becomes enlarged. While not cancerous or fatal, an enlarged prostate can cause discomfort and bothersome symptoms such as weakened urine stream, frequent urination and possibly a complete inability to urinate. About half of men in their 50s have an enlarged prostate, and half of those with an enlarged prostate have bothersome symptoms.

Drugs known as alpha blockers can help, but medications can cause side effects or be ineffective. Surgery may be an option to treat an enlarged prostate, also known as benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH). UCI Medical Center urologists offer two surgical methods to remove excess tissue: minimally invasive GreenLight™ laser vaporization therapy, and traditional surgery called transurethral resection of the prostate, or TURP.

“The GreenLight laser comes the closest to replicating the tissue removal of TURP without the downsides,” which include longer hospitalization time and more bleeding, says Dr. Leland Ronningen, UCI urologist.

The GreenLight procedure takes between 30 minutes and 2 hours. The doctor inserts a scope through the patient's urethra to the site of the prostate, where a laser beam removes the prostate tissue that blocks urine from flowing through the urethra. Patients leave the hospital within 24 hours, many of them the same day. TURP usually requires one or two full days in the hospital.

The cause of BPH is not known. The main risk factors are age and family history. “You don't need to be treated for BPH unless the symptoms are bothersome,” Ronningen says. “If they are, see your primary care doctor or a urologist.”

**For an appointment with a UCI urologist, call 714-456-7005.**



## Road Wise: Computer Program Gives Drivers a Fitness Test

Older drivers may be more experienced, but aging may also result in physical changes that could make handling an automobile risky. Reduced flexibility, weakened strength, longer reaction time and diminished vision can affect driving ability.

A good tool for assessing these issues is an easy-to-use computer program called “Road Wise,” which is available for viewing at the UCI SeniorHealth Center in Orange and for purchase at all AAA of Southern California locations (\$5 for AAA members, \$7 for non-members). The 30-minute CD administers a simple test to determine how fit a person is to drive.

“It really is an excellent test to see where older adults may have difficulty on the road,” says Camille Fitzpatrick, UCI nurse practitioner at the center. “I recommend people do the test once a year.”

“Road Wise” requires two people at a time. It guides them through eight functions, such as general mobility, leg strength, hand-eye coordination, head-neck flexibility, peripheral vision and night vision. When finished, the program gives an individual score plus instructions on where improvement is needed.

“Older adults usually are safer drivers, despite the negative stereotype,” Fitzpatrick says. “They consistently use their seat belts, they are cautious, they don't drive often at night and they obey the rules. But the reality is normal aging brings changes that can make driving more of a challenge. This doesn't mean they can't drive. They just might need to do a little more physical therapy, exercise and planning to make sure they can react quickly enough when necessary.”

**To view the “Road Wise” CD free at the UCI SeniorHealth Center, please call 714-456-7007.**

