

# Patrick, 59

## Electrical technician and father-to-three who endured enlarged prostate symptoms for almost 10 years, *PERTH*

Electrical technician, husband, and father-to-three, Patrick, 59, Perth, was diagnosed with benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), or an enlarged prostate, in 2023, after watching his symptoms progress for almost a decade.

An enlarged prostate is a common, urological disease affecting older men<sup>1,2</sup> that involves a non-cancerous enlargement of the prostate gland, and expansion of the surrounding tissues.<sup>3,4</sup> This enlargement leads to compression of the urethra, reducing the flow of urine from the bladder, and sometimes blocking it entirely.<sup>5</sup>

Patrick lived with, and endured frequent urination, sense of incomplete bladder emptying, urge to urinate and weak urinary stream for just shy of 10 years. Eventually, his symptoms grew so severe, that he sometimes felt the urge to use the toilet several times per hour, even after 'emptying' his bladder. Considering this to be "abnormal", Patrick finally chose to act. He visited his doctor for professional advice.

Patrick was subsequently placed on medication to help manage his symptoms and to reduce the size of his enlarged prostate. After persisting with medication for more than two years, Patrick grew uncomfortable with the prospect of taking "life-long medication". He sought advice from a Urologist, which he augmented his own desk research.

In October 2023 Patrick chose to undergo a minimally invasive procedure to reduce his enlarged prostate, and alleviate his symptoms.

Today, Patrick has chosen to share his story, to raise community awareness, and understanding of the symptoms of an enlarged prostate, and to urge men nation-wide, to prioritise their health.

This is Patrick's story.

Patrick showed initial symptoms of an enlarged prostate at 50 years of age. He, nonetheless, chose to "soldier on", and adjust his lifestyle accordingly.

"Over 9+ years, my toilet visits became more frequent, urgent in nature, and I felt unable to fully empty my bladder," said Patrick.

"Over time, I got used to living with these symptoms, and just put up with them."

Although his symptoms were manageable at the outset, over time, Patrick recognised he was changing his behaviour as a coping mechanism.

"I adapted my behaviour. For instance, I would never walk past a toilet as to avoid a feeling of urgency.

"Living with an enlarged prostate made me more aware of my surroundings, and the need to be able to quickly access a toilet," said Patrick.

"I would often drive along a freeway and experience a sense of urgency. So I'd have to make a quick exit to visit the closest service station to go to the toilet.

"At work, I would sit in complete discomfort, hoping my meetings would finish on time, without any further questions, so I could dash to the toilet afterwards."

Eventually, Patrick realised his symptoms were not normal, and that other guys were not wrestling with the same health issue.

"It just didn't seem right. No one else was visiting the toilet as often as I was," said Patrick.

Over time, Patrick began to question whether he had developed "an old man's problem."

Fortunately, he was aware potential prostate-related issues may signal something else.

"I was familiar with prostate cancer. My dad was diagnosed with the disease at 80 years of age. He was advised it was a slow growing cancer and treatment was not necessary as old age would claim him first," Patrick said.

After visiting his GP, he was diagnosed with an enlarged prostate. Patrick was also regularly screened for elevated prostate-specific antigen (PSA) levels.

"I've always been open with my doctor. Should a blood test ever prove abnormal, I always ask my doctor to fix me.

"I didn't have prostate cancer, but I had an overactive bladder (OAB) caused by Benign Prostate Hyperplasia (BPH) leading to Lower Urinary Tract Symptoms (LUTS)," Patrick said.

For 2 years Patrick subsequently used medication to help reduce both the size of his prostate, and to control his frequency issue. But eventually, he grew tired of being on medication.

Next, Patrick considered undergoing surgery to treat his enlarged prostate. However, after being informed of his likelihood of developing erectile dysfunction (ED) post-surgery, Patrick chose not to pursue this path, given he still considered himself to be 'relatively young, and virile.'

"Eventually, I elected to have a minimally invasive procedure that enabled a faster recovery," said Patrick.

Confiding in his network helped Patrick to manage the stigma of living with an enlarged prostate for many years.

"Once I broke the seal, and told my friends about my enlarged prostate, they accepted my two toilet visits per drink.

"I found it easier to talk with the guys at work – especially the older ones – about my enlarged prostate, than to my own son or daughters," said Patrick.

"Although I prefer to keep my medical issues private, informing my work colleagues about heading off to medical appointments, made it easier for me."

Given Patrick's first-hand experience of living with an enlarged prostate, he urges other men who suspect they may be living with symptoms of an enlarged prostate, to seek help without delay.

"By not undergoing a regular health check, you allow a potential benign growth, or quiet killer, to sneak up on you.

"Don't jeopardise your health. Monitor your symptoms, keep a record of any changes, and if things seem odd, visit your GP straight away," Patrick said.

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