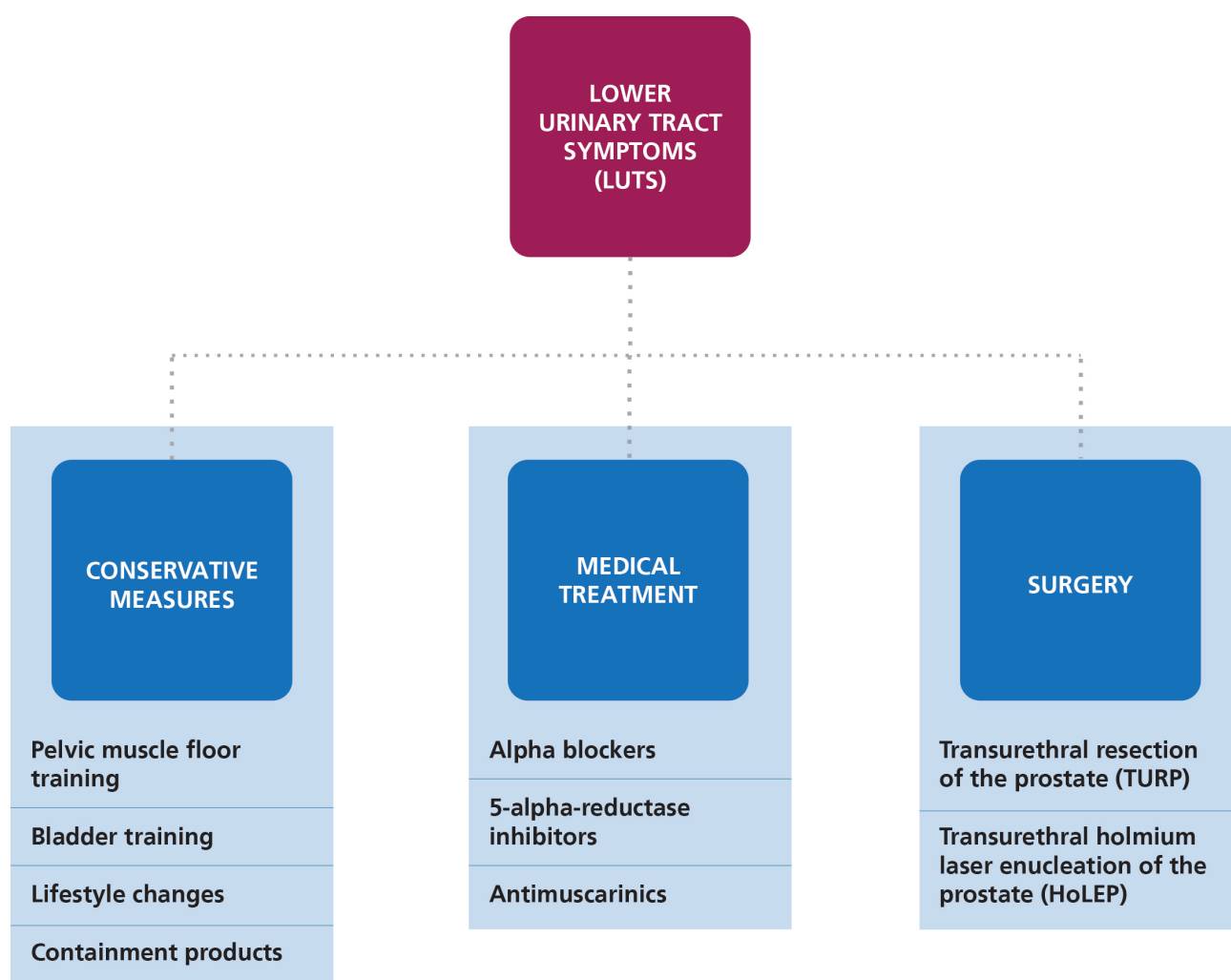


Deciding what to do about lower urinary tract symptoms (LUTS)

This short decision aid is to help you decide what to do about your lower urinary tract symptoms. You can use it on your own, or with your doctor, to help you make a decision about what's right for you at this time.

There are three main choices if you have lower urinary tract symptoms. You can choose:

- **Conservative measures**, including training your bladder to hold more fluid, and drinking less before going to bed
- **Medical treatments**, including different types of medicine
- **Surgery**, including an operation on the prostate gland.



What are my options?

	Conservative measures	Medical treatment	Surgery
What is the treatment?	<p>Conservative measures for lower urinary tract symptoms include things you can try yourself, without using drugs or surgery. These can include pelvic muscle floor training, bladder training, post-void milking, lifestyle changes or containment products</p> <p>For some men, it can mean doing nothing for the time being. Symptoms don't always get worse or become severe or troublesome. Some men choose to wait and keep an eye on their symptoms before deciding if they need any more treatment.</p>	<p>Medical treatment for your lower urinary tract symptoms means taking drugs to help control your symptoms. Your doctor may advise you to take more than one drug for your symptoms, because different drugs treat different symptoms.</p> <p>There are three main types of drugs to treat lower urinary tract symptoms. Alpha blockers make the muscles around the prostate and the bladder relax, 5-alpha-reductase inhibitors are used to shrink the size of the prostate gland or to stop it getting larger, and antimuscarinics relax the bladder so it takes longer before you feel like your bladder is full.</p>	<p>There are several types of surgery to treat an enlarged prostate. The two main types of surgery are transurethral resection of the prostate (TURP) and transurethral holmium laser enucleation of the prostate (HoLEP). TURP uses a tiny loop heated with an electric current to cut away part of the prostate gland to stop it pressing on the urethra. HoLEP uses a laser to cut away the overgrown parts of the prostate that are blocking the urethra.</p>

	Conservative measures	Medical treatment	Surgery
What is the effect on problems urinating?	<p>Doctors think that some conservative measures might help ease problems urinating. There is not enough evidence to be sure about this.[1]</p>	<p>Alpha blockers, 5-alpha reductase inhibitors, and saw palmetto can increase the amount of urine you are able to pass when you go to the toilet. Some men don't notice much of a difference. [2]</p> <p>Taking two or more drugs in combination is likely to improve your symptoms more than taking one drug.</p>	<p>Surgery can increase the amount of urine you are able to pass when going to the toilet by a noticeable amount. There is no difference between the two main types of surgery (transurethral resection of the prostate [TURP] and holmium laser enucleation of the prostate [HoLEP]) in how much they improve symptoms.[3]</p>

	Conservative measures	Medical treatment	Surgery
What is the effect on chances of having acute urinary retention?	<p>Conservative measures are unlikely to cut your chances of getting acute urinary retention (when you can't urinate completely or at all).</p>	<p>Men who take 5-alpha reductase inhibitors (5-ARIs) are less likely to have problems with acute urinary retention than men who don't take drugs. Between 1 in 100 and 2 in 100 men who take 5-ARIs have retention problems, compared with between 3 in 100 and 4 in 100 men who don't take 5-ARIs.[4]</p>	<p>Having an operation on your prostate should cut your chances of getting acute urinary retention. There is not enough evidence to be sure about how much it might help.</p>

	Conservative measures	Medical treatment	Surgery
What is the effect on urinary continence?	Taking conservative measures is unlikely to cure you if you have urinary incontinence (you cannot control your bladder). Some conservative measures might improve your bladder control. They are unlikely to make your incontinence worse.[5]	<p>Antimuscarinics can help improve symptoms of urinary incontinence. After three months, men who took antimuscarinics leaked urine about half as many times each day as men who didn't take drugs.[6]</p> <p>We don't know if alpha-blockers or 5-alpha reductase inhibitors help urinary incontinence. These drugs are not used for incontinence.</p> <p>Saw palmetto doesn't help urinary incontinence.[7]</p>	<p>Surgery doesn't help men with lower urinary tract symptoms who have urinary incontinence.[8]</p> <p>Surgery to treat lower urinary tract symptoms does not cause incontinence if done successfully. All surgery carries a risk. If the surgery causes accidental damage to the bladder, urethra, or nerves, this may make you incontinent. There is not enough evidence to be sure about how likely this is to happen.</p>

	Conservative measures	Medical treatment	Surgery
What other consequences does this treatment have?	Conservative measures are unlikely to have an effect on your sex life. If conservative measures make you feel more relaxed and in control of your symptoms, that might make you feel more confident about sex.	<p>Men who take alpha blockers and 5-ARIs are more likely to have erection problems and ejaculation problems (dry climax) compared with men who don't take them. About 2 in 100 men who take alpha blockers will have ejaculation problems, and about 3 in 100 will have difficulty getting an erection. [9] About 2 in 100 men who take 5-ARIs will have ejaculation problems. About 7 in 100 men have problems getting an erection. About 5 in 100 will have a reduced sex drive.[10]</p> <p>Antimuscarinics don't cause ejaculation problems. We don't know if saw palmetto can cause sexual problems.</p>	<p>Around 65 men in 100 who have TURP have ejaculation problems (dry climax).[11] Between 40 in 100 and 43 in 100 men who have HoLEP will have ejaculation problems.</p> <p>Between 7 in 100 and 8 in 100 men said they had more problems getting an erection after either kind of surgery. About the same number said that they had fewer problems getting an erection after surgery.[12]</p>

	Conservative measures	Medical treatment	Surgery
What side effects and complications does this treatment have?	<p>You might find bladder training uncomfortable to begin with, as you get used to "holding it in" a little longer each time.</p> <p>Reducing fluids can leave you dehydrated if you cut down too much.[13]</p> <p>Cutting out caffeine suddenly can lead to caffeine withdrawal symptoms, which include headaches, sleepiness, and irritability. Doctors often advise people to cut down gradually, over days or weeks.[14]</p>	<p>Men who take alpha blockers are more likely to feel dizzy, tired, have low blood pressure, or have a runny or blocked nose, compared with men who don't take drugs.[15]</p> <p>More men who take 5-ARIs will have swelling or tenderness around the breasts (called gynaecomastia) compared with men who don't take drugs. This happens to between 1 in 100 and 2 in 100 men who take 5-ARIs.[16]</p> <p>Antimuscarinics may cause some men to have a dry mouth.[17]</p> <p>We don't know if saw palmetto causes side effects.</p>	<p>Prostate surgery can cause complications including bleeding. This can be heavy for a few days. About 3 in 1000 men who have HoLEP will need a blood transfusion during the operation to replace the lost blood. About 33 in 1000 men who have TURP will need a blood transfusion.[18]</p> <p>All men need a catheter for 1 to 2 days after surgery to help them urinate. About 3 in 100 men who have surgery need a second catheter for a longer period after the operation. This is not permanent.[19]</p>

	Conservative measures	Medical treatment	Surgery
What is the speed of treatment effect?	<p>Improvements from bladder training or pelvic floor muscle training are likely to take weeks or months rather than days.</p> <p>Pelvic floor muscle training may take at least three months to work.[20] Bladder training can take between three weeks to three months to show an improvement.</p> <p>Pads and urine collecting devices will work straight away.</p>	<p>Drugs take between a few days and six months to start working, depending on which ones you take. Alpha blockers start working within days. 5-ARI drugs may take up to six months before you see an improvement.</p> <p>We don't know how long saw palmetto takes to have any effect on symptoms.</p>	<p>We don't know how quickly surgery can improve your symptoms but if surgery works for you, you should see improvements within a few days. There has not been enough research looking at this question.</p>

What are the pros and cons of each option?

People with lower urinary tract symptoms have different experiences about the health problem and views on treatment. Choosing the treatment option that is best for the patient means considering how the consequences of each treatment option will affect their life.

Here are some questions people may want to consider about treatment for lower urinary tract symptoms:

- Do they find their symptoms intolerable?
- Are they willing to take the risk of side effects or complications from treatment?
- Do they want a treatment that will stop their symptoms getting worse in future?
- Do they want a treatment that works quickly?