

PHYSICAL THERAPY FOR PELVIC PAIN

Physical therapists utilize their specialized medical training to thoroughly evaluate each patient and design treatment programs that address her individual needs. It is the goal of the therapist to empower the patient and make her a partner in her care.

Brought to you by:

Sutton Place Physical Therapy

333 E. 56 Street
New York, NY 10022

Phone: (212)-317-1600

Fax: (212)-317-9855

www.suttonplacept.com



For more information about how Physical Therapists can help with women's health conditions please contact the Section on Women's Health of the American Physical Therapy Association at:

Website: www.womenshealthapta.org

Telephone: (800) 999-APTA extension 3229

Contributors: Lora Anderson, PT,
Jolene Faught, MPT, Jennifer Roos, MPT,
Erin Hytrek, DPT



Editor: MJ Strauthal, PT, BCIA-PMDB

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Pelvic Pain... There is Help

Pelvic pain is a general term used to describe debilitating discomfort in the pelvic region. Pelvic pain can occur at any time in a woman's life, frequently causing significant emotional distress and adversely affecting her quality of life. Unfortunately many women develop chronic pelvic pain, symptoms that persist longer than three months. If chronic pelvic pain goes untreated, additional bladder, bowel, and sexual dysfunction may develop.

The Normal Pelvis

The pelvis serves many roles in our bodies. Nearly every movement and position of the human body depends on the pelvis. Proper activity and balance between all of the muscles, joints, and tissues of the pelvis are essential for normal pain-free function. The pelvis also plays a role in sexual function, support and protection of the internal organs, and control of bladder and bowel function.



WHAT CAUSES PELVIC PAIN?

Dysfunction and pain in the pelvis may have many origins or can result from a combination of factors. Each organ (uterus, vagina, bladder, bowel), tissue and joint may produce a specific pattern of pain or vague pelvic discomfort. Your pelvic pain and symptoms need to be discussed thoroughly with your physician to rule out systemic causes or possible problems with the organs. However, the bones, muscles and soft tissues (ligaments, tendons and connective tissue) of the pelvis can also contribute to pelvic pain syndromes. These things must also be addressed to ensure proper treatment and optimum outcomes. This is where the Physical Therapist can help.

WHY PHYSICAL THERAPY?

Physical therapists are experts in treating the musculoskeletal system (the muscles, joints and the surrounding tissues of the body). Physical therapists that are specially trained in women's health can safely and effectively help women who suffer from pelvic pain.

Specially trained Physical Therapists can evaluate and treat:

- Improper alignment or impaired mobility of the pelvic bones and joints
- Overactive pelvic muscles (muscle spasm)
- Underactive pelvic muscles (muscle weakness)
- Restrictions or impaired mobility of ligaments, tendons or connective tissues and structures

These problems can occur for a number of reasons including a fall, a car accident, or other trauma, as well as childbirth, surgery, radiation, disease processes, inactivity, repeated faulty movement patterns, repeated faulty postures or positions during normal activities.

Injuries or problems with the hips, abdomen, lumbar spine, or pelvis (including the sacroiliac joints, pubic bones, or tailbone) may also cause dysfunction and lead to pelvic pain.

Physical Therapists

trained in treating women's health conditions can effectively evaluate and treat all of these situations.

A referral to a Physical Therapist would be appropriate for women with

- **Pain** with intercourse or other sexual activities
- **Pain** with tampon use
- **Pain** with a speculum exam, including a PAP test, or other types of pelvic exams
- **Difficulty** with normal activities such as sitting, rising from a chair, standing or walking
- **Difficulty** with recreational activities like golfing, walking, jogging, or other types of exercise
- **Chronic** constipation or difficulty passing a bowel movement
- **Urinary** urgency, frequency, or retention
- **Pain** in the groin
- **Pain** in the buttock
- **Chronic** low back, hip or sacroiliac pain
- **Pain** that shoots, burns, tingles or otherwise travels down the leg
- **Abdominal pain**

