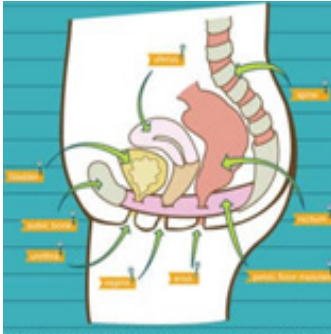


PELVIC HEALTH

WHAT IS THE PELVIC FLOOR?

The pelvic floor is a bowl shaped set of muscles, tendons, ligaments, and tissue that forms a “floor” at the base of our pelvis. It has four main functions: supportive (the bladder, bowels, and uterus in females rely on the pelvic floor to stay supported), sphincteric (help keep us continent when the muscles are strong), sexual (superficial muscles help with arousal), and stabilizing (play a significant role in stabilizing our hips, pelvis, and low back).



In this image, the colored pink strip along the bottom is the pelvic floor in relation to the female organs. If the pelvic floor is weak or injured, that could affect the position of the organs allowing gravity to pull them downwards. Now imagine if the pelvic floor were too tight. This could change the ability of the rectum to expand, compress on the urethra, and could even tighten the vaginal canal and cause pelvic pain.

WHAT IS PELVIC FLOOR PHYSICAL THERAPY?

Pelvic floor physical therapy treats the muscles, ligaments, and tendons mentioned above the same way any other muscle in the body is treated. We work on strength, mobility, motor control, and flexibility of these muscles in order to address whatever specific impairments are found during evaluation. The only difference is that often these muscles cannot be accessed like other muscles because they are deep in the pelvis. Some can be examined externally, however some require a vaginal or rectal exam in order to truly assess strength and mobility.

WHAT DOES AN EVALUATION FOR PELVIC FLOOR PT LOOK LIKE?

STEP 1: History/Intake – The pelvic floor physical therapist will ask you questions about your pain, symptoms, bowel/bladder habits, diet, fluid intake, career, stress level, trauma, medications, and pregnancy history. This helps the PT individualize your care.

STEP 2: Orthopedic Assessment – Pelvic floor PTs are just like your everyday orthopedic physical therapists with a specialty in the pelvic floor. The PT will evaluate your spine, SI joints, hip joints, rib cage, and breathing patterns in order to ensure impairments here are addressed.

STEP 3: Pelvic floor assessment – A pelvic floor assessment involves both external and internal examination of the vagina and/or rectum. The internal assessment is the gold standard for evaluating the strength, length, and quality of the pelvic floor. For patients who are too symptomatic or prefer to not have the internal examination, an external exam can be performed instead.

STEP 4: Education – This is the time for you to understand the findings from the evaluation, learn what the physical therapy plan consists of, and learn what pelvic PT can do in order to assist with your condition or impairments.



PELVIC HEALTH

WHAT DOES A TYPICAL TREATMENT SESSION LOOK LIKE?

Treatment can consist of muscle trigger point release, mobilization of tight joints, muscle energy techniques to assist in muscle relaxation, pelvic floor education with manual feedback, and biofeedback to assist in the relaxation of the pelvic floor musculature. Sometimes treatment will involve internal work and sometimes it will involve external orthopedic therapy. Pelvic floor dysfunction is multifactorial and every treatment session will be individualized to what you need.

WHY DO I NEED PELVIC FLOOR PT?

Pelvic floor physical therapy can address a number of conditions, including but not limited to the following:

- Pelvic pain
- Painful intercourse
- Constipation
- Incontinence
- Urine/stool leakage with activity
- Difficulty with urination or bowel movements
- Hip, low back, SI joint, or groin pain not otherwise responding to typical PT
- Vulvodynia (pain of the vulva)
- Vaginismus (pain of the vagina)
- Painful or premature ejaculation
- Difficulty with arousal/orgasm