

Pelvic Floor Dysfunction:

Treatments are Available

One out of every five Americans, of all ages, experience some form of pelvic floor dysfunction at some point during his or her life. You might assume that adult women are the only people susceptible to pelvic floor dysfunction, but men and children are at risk as well. In fact, millions of Americans actually suffer with the disease; however, many times it goes undetected and untreated.

What is pelvic floor dysfunction?

First, you must understand a few things about the pelvic floor. The pelvic floor is a sort of bed made up of muscles and tissue that extend from the pubic bone to the tailbone. It aids in supporting the abdominal and pelvic organs, and it helps in bladder control, as well as, bowel and sexual activity. As such, pelvic floor dysfunction is pain and disruption of bladder, bowel, and/or sexual function caused by restrictions of the muscles and nerves of the pelvis. Pelvic floor dysfunction can include a varied range of medical issues that arise when muscles of the pelvic floor are weak, tight, or there is a deficiency with the sacroiliac joint, low back, coccyx and/or hip joint.

What causes pelvic floor dysfunction?

One of the most frequent causes of pelvic floor disorders is giving birth to a child. In fact, a woman's risk of developing a pelvic floor disorder increases with the number of times she has given birth. In addition to childbirth, women who are overweight or considered obese are also at greater risk. Pelvic surgery or radiation treatments, which can impair nerves and tissues, can also cause these conditions. Repetitive heavy lifting, genetics, and even chronic constipation, are other factors that can raise your chances of developing pelvic floor dysfunction.

Treatment can make a huge difference for those suffering with pelvic floor dysfunction. For most, the treatment involves primarily behavioral changes, such as refraining from pushing or straining when urinating or having a bowel movement, medication (such as a muscle relaxer), and physical therapy that can teach a patient how to relax and coordinate movement of your pelvic floor muscles. Our

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— Donna Sweetland, MD

board certified OB/GYN, Donna Sweetland, MD, for one, is pleased treatments are now available at St. Margaret's: "I am very excited that St. Margaret's has added the addition of Pelvic Floor Therapy to their Physical Therapy Department. Michelle Zens, Physical Therapist, has received certification for this program. Sweetland says, "I have utilized this for the past several years for my patients." She further adds that "this has proven to be beneficial for many patients of varying ages and for multiple reasons." "Anyone interested in pursuing this program can be referred by their medical physician, midlevel provider, gynecologist, obstetrician, or urologist," she states. If you or a family member are experiencing any of the symptoms mentioned earlier and are concerned about pelvic floor dysfunction, talk to your doctor.

Symptoms May Include:

Bladder:

- Interstitial Cystitis
- Urethral Syndrome
- Urgency-Frequency Syndrome
- Urinary Incontinence
- Urinary Retention

Bowel:

- Constipation
- Diarrhea
- Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD)
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)
- Fecal Incontinence
- Hemorrhoid Pain
- Rectal Prolapsed or Anal Fissure

Women:

- Painful Intercourse
- Vaginismus
- Vestibular Pain

Men:

- Erectile Dysfunction
- Testicular/ Penile Pain or Numbness

SOURCES:

Uchospitals.edu; Emhphysicaltherapy.com;
Beyondbasicsphysicaltherapy.com;
columbiasurgery.org/colorectal/pelvic-floor-disorders-frequently-asked-questions

