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Pelvic Floor Dysfunction

Pelvic floor dysfunction (PFD) refers to conditions which involve the pelvic floor muscles (muscles which surround the vagina and rectum) when they do not function "normally." This may be seen as laxity and low tone in the muscles and surrounding tissues or spasms and increased tone in the muscles.

The pelvic floor is composed of the musculature and

pelvis. The function of these muscles is to support the viscera (organs) in the area, provide sphincter control (helping maintain continence) and improving sexual activity.

Symptoms of PFD may include pelvic pain, genital pain, urinary and/or bowel dysfunction and sexual dysfunction. Patients may complain of dyspareunia (painful intercourse), painful sitting, low back pain,

incontinence and/or prolapse. Patients are also commonly (but not limited to) referred during pregnancy or postpartum, post Hysterectomy or post Prostatectomy.

Pelvic Floor Dysfunction can affect women and men of all ages.

I Just Can't Go

Constipation is a complaint I hear often by patients in my clinic. "I haven't had a bowel movement in days," or "I have several, small, hard bowel movements a day" are some of the phrases these patients use. Some patients also complain of bloating or abdominal pain. Constipation affects approximately more than 4 million Americans and many of these people (2.5 million) visit a physician for the problem.

Some facts about constipation:

- **It is a symptom, not disease**
- **Poor diet is a**

typical cause

- **Laxatives (over the counter) are the most common (self) treatment**
- **Most common in women and adults >65**
- **Lack of fiber, liquids and physical activity are the most common causes**

Although you may discuss this problem with your primary physician, the specialist you should see is a gastroenterologist.

Medical testing for constipation may include

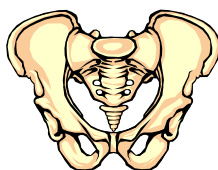
Colorectal Transit study, Defecography, Sigmoidoscopy or Colonoscopy.

So what can be done about constipation? Well, first take a closer look at your diet and liquid intake. See if more fiber and an increase of water intake are needed. Stay away from constipating foods such as bananas and white rice.

It is necessary asses your daily physical activity; perhaps a little more exercise can be added to your schedule.

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What is Pelvic Floor Physical Therapy?



When most people go to their physician in regards to some pelvic pain, the last thing they think they will hear is a referral to a physical therapist. Did you know that physical therapists can also treat pelvic pain due to Pelvic Floor Dysfunction (PFD)? Not all physical therapists treat PFD. You need to be evaluated and treated by one who specializes in this area.

Now that you have the appointment made, what is to be expected? After taking a thorough history, the physical therapist will begin their hands on evaluation. This may include posture assessment and orthopedic

screening, muscle strength testing, lower extremity flexibility, range of motion and biofeedback.

Soft tissue palpation of the muscles surrounding the pelvic girdle and the pelvic floor will assess myofascial restrictions, trigger points and connective tissue mobility.

How does the physical therapist assess the pelvic floor muscles? First, an external assessment of the pelvic floor muscles can be done by palpation and visualization. The patient will be asked to contract, relax and bulge these muscles.

Treatment of the pelvic floor muscles will be based upon the evaluation. Hands on techniques used include trigger point and myofascial release, skin rolling, visceral mobilization, scar tissue release, neural/nerve mobilization, etc. The physical therapist uses these techniques to release the tension, spasm and restrictions. The shortened muscles will be re-educated to become lengthened and return to "normal" position. There may be discomfort during treatment and after (1-2 days of soreness). The goal is to relax the tightened, high toned muscles and reduce pain.

I Just Can't Go (continued)

Smart toileting is needed. Try to find a time in the day about 30 minutes after a meal to go to the toilet. Do not hurry and do not strain. When you get an urge to have a bowel movement, do not ignore it.



"...how we sit on the toilet plays a large role."

In physical therapy, we work on proper use of muscles including the abdominals and pelvic floor muscles. Certain stretches and abdominal massage can help release abdominal tension if present. Posture is addressed: how we sit on the toilet plays a large role in defecation. Posture on the toilet will affect the rectal angle and the ease of having a bowel movement.

Relaxation techniques such as diaphragmatic breathing are of great use. Guided imagery may assist in relaxation and muscle awareness.

Myofascial release of the pelvic floor muscles may also be necessary to alleviate the tension. This may involve intra-rectal muscle release.

Biofeedback is helpful in teaching a person with muscle tension (as often seen in people who are constipated) to relax and then to use the muscles more properly. If the pelvic floor muscles are weak in a person who is constipated, biofeedback will assist in gaining strength and improve usage of these muscles.

Biofeedback can also be used to teach proper abdominal muscle function and coordination between the pelvic floor and abdominal muscles.

I always recommend some form of cardio exercise to be performed (daily preferable). Core strengthening is usually required, specifically the abdomen and pelvic floor.

Constipation is obviously a big problem in America. It is my recommendation to address it in a multidisciplinary approach including (but not limited to) physician, physical therapist and nutritionist. Yoga, acupuncture and natural remedies are complimentary as well.

Nutrition

The holidays are approaching us. A time most of us tend to indulge on the food side. Then the New Year approaches and many of us are searching for the quick weight loss diets. What a great time to talk nutrition.

I recommend taking a look at the food pyramid for the types and portion of foods needed in our diets. Remember to pay attention to portion sizes.

A diet which includes lean meat, fish and eggs may help with controlling inflammation.

It is advisable to eat a high protein diet with low or no

processed foods to improve muscle tone.

In general, we should limit our sugar intake and try as much as we can to eat fresh fruit and vegetables.

Unfortunately, some of my patients have to stay away from certain food. Patients with bladder pain and sensitivities need to keep away from caffeine and soda, spicy foods, citrus and alcohol.

To avoid constipation, try adding more fluids (water preferred) and fiber to your diet. Add whole grains, beans and berries for example, into your diet. (See our Constipation article)

For the women going through menopause and after, I like to recommend that they get enough calcium and iron intake as well as fiber.

Food allergies and intolerance are common. It is worthy discussing this with your physician. Food sensitivities can give you symptoms of pain flares and headaches for example.

Vitamin D has been getting a lot of buzz recently. There have been recent studies published showing that a deficiency in Vitamin D has been related to some pelvic floor disorders.

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"...food pyramid for the types and portion of foods needed in our diets."

Postpartum Health for Moms

Often I discuss the importance of taking care of oneself when pregnant and if needed see a physical therapist. Well the same goes for postpartum. Back pain, pelvic pain and incontinence are not to be considered "normal" postpartum.

Postpartum Health for Moms is 7 sessions of educational material and exercise program developed by Diane Lee and Linda-Joy Lee (Physiotherapists from British Columbia). The purpose of this program is for postpartum women to work with the physical therapist to restore form and function.

The program can be performed as a group or as a one on sessions. The sessions are divided to focus on specific core muscles (Diaphragm, Transversus Abdominus, Multifidus, and Pelvic Floor). Focus is placed on stability and how to achieve it, posture and support postpartum, release of gripping muscles. We discuss topics such as incontinence and toileting. Finally, we "put it all together." This is where we discuss proper ways to stand especially when baby is being held, proper sitting posture and correct ways to transfer as well as lifting.

The program aims to bring back a healthy muscle system and regain awareness of these muscles. The techniques and cues provided in the program can be then carried on to further exercise and gym classes.

If during a group session we find there maybe some issues or difficulty with some of the exercises, a private session may be suggested to you.

If you or anyone you know is interested in such a program, please contact us.

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.coredynamicspt.com

What Have We Done?

After a quick maternity leave, I returned to the clinic in early July. Since then I have been keeping busy with patients and events.

First, I want to welcome Anabel Calo-Diaz to our staff. She is handling all front desk duties.

On November 4th, Niva was a guest speaker at a Bella Bellies (www.bellabellies.com) teacher training in Hoboken,

NJ. Core Dynamics Physical Therapy hosted a third Coping Group On November 7th, 2011. Nancy Fish Bravman assisted in running this support group and to provide us with her great knowledge on coping and having hope. We were happy to have new people join us as well as some returning people.

On November 17, I attended a book launch for "Healing Painful Sex." This is a

wonderful resource written by Deborah Coady, MD and Nancy Fish, MSW, MPH.

On December 5th, we will be hosting "Sugar Blues" with Erica Danziger. Erica is a Holistic Health Coach. For more information check out her website naturegirlwellness.healthcoach.integrativenutrition.com.

You can always visit us on Facebook or our website for the latest events.

NUTRITION (Continued)

Low Vitamin D levels have been linked to poor muscle strength.

Other vitamins and supplements worth mentioning include Saw Palmetto (for males) as it

has benefits in Prostate health. Omega-3s are beneficial as an anti-inflammatory. Probiotics are beneficial in getting the right bacteria into our bodies.

Obviously a balanced diet is the best way to go. Fill

your plate with color (different foods) and it will be more satisfying to you.

And do not forget to add in a little exercise to the plan as well.

About Our Organization...

Core Dynamics Physical Therapy provides experience and passion in addressing pelvic floor muscle dysfunction in women and men of all ages, pre-natal and

postpartum care.

Mission: To provide an environment where women and men of all ages can receive one on one hands on treatment,

where they can be listened to and cared for according to their symptoms. This is a place where they learn to be more functional and return to their recreational activities.

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