



# THIS ONE'S FOR THE GIRLS

**Pelvic and back pain** does not have to be part of your pregnancy. **Incontinence** is not an unavoidable part of aging. **Scar tissue and swelling** from a breast cancer surgery doesn't need to hold you back.

## It's Time To Speak Up

It's as common as low back pain, yet many women suffer with pelvic pain and dysfunction in silence every year. Many women don't speak up about their pelvic problems because, whether they're pregnant or aging, they believe that it's just something they'll have to live with because they're a woman.

If referred to physical therapy, people are often skeptical. **"Physical therapists are skilled at addressing issues related to the musculoskeletal system. Why would they deal with issues that seem related to the bladder and reproductive system?"** But muscles may have more to do with your pelvic dysfunction than you think.

## Your Pelvic Floor

A group of muscles, commonly referred to as the pelvic floor, act like a sling at the base of the pelvis (both women and men). This group of muscles help to support the weight of your internal organs, as well as maintain bladder/bowel control.

Just like many other muscles in your body, when the pelvic floor senses that something is wrong, it contracts to splint and protect the area. Pregnancy and pelvic surgeries (i.e. endometriosis surgery or

According to the *National Institute for Health*, up to **32 percent** of women of childbearing age have pelvic pain that is severe enough to cause them to miss work.

cesarian section) can disrupt the tissues and place stress on the pelvic floor. While this splinting is natural, it can cause pain, which leads to further tightening of the muscles, resulting in severe pelvic and back pain.

It's not just chronic contraction than can cause problems. Inversely, if the pelvic floor is failing to contract properly, it can lead to a condition called **stress urinary incontinence**. Approximately 25 to 45 percent of women nationwide experience incontinence. This condition is often seen in women during the postpartum period, and in the elderly, when the pelvic floor becomes weakened. This means that simple things like coughing, laughing, sneezing, and physical activity can cause small amounts of involuntary urinary leakage.

**Just like any other muscle in the body, the pelvic floor can be retrained through specialized therapy techniques.** We utilize pelvic floor exercises, which can help to tighten and tone the muscles that have become weak, re-educate the muscles to relax and contract at the appropriate times, and teach you relaxation and biofeedback techniques so that you can maintain proper function.

## Breast Cancer

After undergoing a surgery, such as a mastectomy or lumpectomy, some women experience tightness and swelling around the surgical site and throughout their underarm. The disruption of the muscle tissue after an incision can result in scar tissue, which can restrict motion and even effect your posture, causing you discomfort. If lymph nodes were removed during the surgery, the body may have difficulty removing any swelling from the area.

No matter what type of surgery you have, it's important to do exercises afterward to get the arm and shoulder moving again and minimize any symptoms from the surgery. Physical therapy can help to release restricted tissues caused by the surgery and manage the swelling/lymphedema through manual massage, stretching, and compression.

**WOMEN'S  
HEALTH WEEK**

*July 22nd-26th*



Receive a **FREE** women's health screening from one of our physical therapists.

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